ALTAR AND SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT NOMADIC PERIOD WITH RELATION TO SACRED SPACE AND SACRED TIME

by

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A Dissertation Presented to the
FACULTY OF THE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

June 1962

STRATHMORE BOND
COTTON FIBER U.S.A.

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Premodern man found meaning, creativity, and security in his life by identifying his cultic activity with archetypes--a correspondence made possible by the concept of sacred space and sacred time. These archetypes have reference to the primordial gestures of the gods, ancestors, or culture heroes. Sacred space is the area occupied by the center described as an axis mundi--a channel of communication between the cosmic planes. All centers in sacred space--mountains, sanctuaries, alters, trees, pillars, tombs, springs, etc.--coalesce with the original point of creation. Sacred time is liturgical cyclical time. It permits the coincidence of act and archetype.

A center is established by the erection of an altar, a cosmogonic act , in response to a hierophany. The completed altar is identified with the comos. The altar sarifice, through which life is released for the animation of the new creation, corresponds to the cosmogonic struggle. Time is renewed through cosmic drama in which altar and sacrifice are prominent. The spoken part of this ritual, the myth, may be defined as the dramatic narrative form in which man expresses his relationship to the comos. These concepts describe a pattern common to the ancient Near East.

The problem with which this project is concerned relates to the possibility of discovering a similar ontology in the religious expression of the ancient Hebrews. Since it is most likely that this pattern--if it exists--would be found in the most primitive epoch, investigation is limited to the nomadic period. This study, therefore, is based upon the hypothesis that the most primitive Old Testament sacrifices and related rites may be described in the context of the repetition of archetypal gestures in sacred space and sacred time. Source material has been limited largely to the literature which

reflects the nomadic period, viz., the Hexateuch, Judges and archaeological data.

Evidence has been submitted to indicate that the religious expression of the patriarchs of the early nomadic period corresponded to the common Near Eastern pattern. However, the nomadic character of these culture heroes with their concept of sky-god, their marginal interest in vegetable fertility, and their strong clan solidarity porvided a background for the cultural divergence made evident in the later nomadic period. In sacred space Israel found security and meaning in all periods of her nomadic life as illustrated by the centrality of the sanctuary. In sacred time the patriarchs were able to take possession of new territory through the erection of an altar in response to a hierophany.

In the later nomadic pattern sacred space, although reinterpreted, was retained. Sacred time, however, was greatly modified to permit a linear view which leaves room for the prophetic thrust of promise and fulfillment. Evidence for the partial rejection of sacred time and the reinterpretation of sacred space is seen in the prohibitions relating to altar construction and corresponding ritual. These indicate that the erection of an altar was no longer identified with the cosmogony. Support for the modifiction of the concept of time is also found in the interpretation of the movement of history with relation to the will of Yahweh.

The persistence of the concept of the sacred with reference to space and time is indicated by the relation of sacrifice and accompanying ceremonies to the transition from the sacred to the profane. This concerns the defense of the center, the institution of the priesthood, the element of covering with regard to disqualifications, threshold rites, passage rites, and pilgrimages.

This study suggests an area of further research in which the development of these concepts with relation to Hebrew prophecy, messianism, and eschatology--especially in its apocalyptic espression--would be carried out.

PREFACE

The writings of Mircea Eliade, Professor of Religion at the University of Chicago, have stimulated my interest in primitive man's attitude toward reality as witnessed by his compulsion to find meaning in his life and action only in so far as he is able to identify himself with archetypal heroes and gestures. With relation to these gestures, the most meaningful of which are cultic, altar and sacrifice are central.

This study is motivated by a desire to clarify certain aspects of the following relationships: the religion of the patriarchs to that of Moses; the religion of Canaan to that of Israel; the religion of the farmer in its nature cult framework to that of the nomad in its sky-god emphasis; cyclical time to linear time; and the sacred to the profane with respect to space and time.

I am happy to acknowledge the encouragement and many helpful suggestions given in class work and personal interview by my adviser, Professor Willis W. Fisher, and by the other members of my Guidance Committee: namely, Professors Leland H. Carlson, Eric L. Titus, and F. Thomas Trotter. A debt of gratitude is also due the Board of

Missions of the General Conference Mennonite Church for granting an extended furlough and the necessary finances to make this period of study possible. I am also deeply aware that had it not been for the complete cooperation of my wife during these months of study, this project could not have been carried out.

All Biblical quotations employed in this project are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

Definition of Project

Altar and sacrifice in the ancient world are usually interpreted against the background of an offense toward the deity or the removal of moral and ceremonial disqualifications[1] and within the framework of human needs related to the continuation of the race, viz., birth, death, and food supply.[2]

Sacrifice is interpreted as a gift when it relates to the appeasement of the deity and the desire to enjoy his blessings.[3] It is viewed as a rite of communion when an effort is made to strengthen the bond between man and his God and between man and man.[1] When it concerns the well-being of the deity and the continuation of fertility on the part of man, beast, and field, it is described as the liberation or giving of life.[2]

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[1] R. K. Yerkes discusses this with regard to the Old Testament in *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), pp. 168-196.

[2] Cf. E. O. James, *Prehistoric Religion* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 229.

[3] Sir Edward Tylor's work, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958; first published in 1871), is the classical expression of the "gift theory." See also George Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 20.

Each of these emphases has been carefully studied by Old Testament scholars, students of comparative religion, and anthropologists. The validity of certain of these elements with relation to the ancient Hebrews is well documented. But there are also data, on the basis of the writings and discoveries of Rudolf Otto,[3] the

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[1] The leading exponent of the "communion theory" was W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), pp. 226, 227.

[2] Several scholars have popularized this view. See especially E. O. James, The Nature and Function of Priesthood (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1955), pp. 145-175; also W. O. E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937). Oesterley states, p. 58, that "the belief that the gods, like men, died, and that, therefore, like men, they needed nourishment to keep them living, points to sacrifice of the life-giving type."

Although Old Testament literature is free from any direct reference to sacrifice as food for the deity, it is of interest to note that Lev. 2:13 calls for cereal offerings seasoned with salt. Also cf. Gen. 8:21, where Yahweh smelled the pleasing sacrificial odor, with the Babylonian account. See George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th ed. rev., Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 330.

[3] Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923).

"Myth-Ritual School,"[1] and Mircea Eliade,[2] which propose that sacrifice is a response to a much more fundamental human need, closely related to the numinous, viz., the longing for reality and meaning in human existence which man finds in identifying himself with the divine archetypal ritual. Eliade describes this as "the thirst for being."[3] Quite independently of ethical connotations, this may underlie all later developments. This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to assess the Biblical and related evidence in exploration of the theory that the most primitive Old Testament sacrifices and rites may be described in relation to the repetition of archetypal gestures in sacred space and sacred time, an identification with the cosmos in an involvement which makes the sacrificer contemporary with the original creation struggle and thus gives meaning to his act.[4] In this project it will also be necessary to investigate possible areas of divergence from this Near Eastern archaic pattern during the Old Testament nomadic period.

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[1] This has reference to a group of scholars who collaborated with S. H. Hooke in a series of publications, the first of which was Myth and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

[2] Professor of the History of Religion at the University of Chicago.

[3] Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 11.

[4] With reference to premodern man's view of sacrifice, Eliade, p. 35, states: "A sacrifice, for example, not only exactly reproduces the initial sacrifice revealed by a god ab origine, at the beginning of time, it also takes place at that same primordial mythical moment; in other words, every sacrifice repeats the

For primitive man that which is meaningful is that which was done by the gods, the culture heroes, or the ancestors of the clan at the beginning of time. Only such actions are sacred, and only the sacred is real. This theory, of which Eliade is the best known exponent, will be developed in each section of this paper in relation to sacrifice and related rites. Primitive man feared the unknown, the untried. His observation of the cyclical renewal of nature in all areas of life and his identification with this phenomenon probably provided the basis for this ontology. As we shall see, this demands the continuous regeneration of time and the coalescence of sacred space with the original point of creation.

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initial sacrifice and coincides with it. All sacrifices are performed at the same mythical instant of the beginning; through the paradox of rite, profane time and duration are suspended."

Similarly, E. O. James in "The Sacred and the Secular in Primitive Religion," The Modern Churchman, New Series, II, No. 2 (Oct., 1957), p. 79, writes: "The things done at the threshold of creation live on as a unifying dynamic in the present day by the continual repetition of the mythical events in the duly authorized ritual. Thus, the creative period is an ever-present reality, and the things done therein are re-enacted in the traditional ceremony and re-told in sacred lore."

This study is limited to the nomadic period, roughly from the migration of Abraham through the early years of the conquest of Palestine.[1] In this epoch, especially in the religious expressions of the patriarchs, there is more likelihood of discovering whether or not Hebrew concepts and practices are to be distinguished greatly from those common to the ancient Near Eastern World. As we shall see, there is reason to believe that in its development later Hebrew religion achieved, at least in part and to a degree unequalled in the ancient world, an emancipation from circular history[2] and from the terror of unpossessed chaotic

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[1] Approximately 1900-1200 B. C. Cf. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1957; first published in 1940), pp. 200, 255-257.

[2] Eliade in Cosmos and History, p. 104, writes: ". . . for the first time, the prophets placed value on history, succeeded in transcending the traditional vision of the cycle . . . and discovered one-way time." This development took place, according to Eliade, because of their ability to see history as theophany. These manifestations and acts of God were not conceived as repetitions. They were interpreted as something new. History was given direction and a goal. With God in control the terror of history was attenuated. This suggests a basis for progress which was lacking in the traditional cyclical view.

However, due to the cyclical nature of life itself, the circular view has probably never been completely transcended. The Hebrew festivals, recurrent each year, are illustrative of this. The messianic hope in Hebrew history, quite as much as the apocalyptic literature, reveals to us a cyclical character or at least a correspondence between the Urzeit and the Endzeit. The Messianic Age, or the period of the Son of Man in the apocalyptic writings, is, in a sense, a renewal of primeval conditions, i.e., paradise.

Within this over-all circular view which, in a way, seems to encompass even the linear time envisioned by the space.[1] It is for this reason that the more primitive period is of greater importance for this project.

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prophets, W. W. Fisher (Class Lecture, Religion 602, SCST, 1961) has suggested that along this linear plane we may project a spiral. History moves forward but within the larger movement, there is constant repetition.

In connection with this ancient mythological thought pattern which sees event as recurrence, Gerhard von Rad in his article "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," trans. John Bright, Interpretation, XV, No. 2 (April, 1961), pp. 174-192, asks whether the linear way from type to antitype can be designated as a cyclical occurrence. His answer is negative. The relation between the primeval event and the final event is, according to him, a correspondence rather than a repetition.

Martin Noth, dealing with the same problem, in "The 'Re-presentation' of the Old Testament in Proclamation," trans. James Mays, Interpretation, XV, No. 1 (Jan., 1961), pp. 50-60, describes the essence of the post-nomadic understanding of history with his theory of "re-presentation" of past events. According to him these great Hebrew feasts and cultic celebrations can best be understood in terms of dramatized history as opposed to traditional dramatized myth. This is supported by the narration of Yahweh's wonderful acts as a part of this dramatic "re-presentation." (Cf. Exod. 12:24-27; Deut. 5:3; 31:1-13). Noth, however, does not deny the connection between this viewpoint and the ancient cyclical pattern.

[1] Unpossessed chaotic space for premodern man parallels the unknown in relation to time, i.e., the terror of history. Primitive man tried to avoid this unknown in both time and space. In this, too, the prophets, under the pressure of historical circumstances, were able to go beyond the traditional view. Ezekiel was able to give meaning to the exile by means of his vision of the motility of Yahweh. In Chap. X he sees the glory of Yahweh leave the temple area and the city of Jerusalem in order to find its resting place among the exiles. Later, under the conditions of the Restoration, Chap. XLIII, it returns. Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, Chap. XXIX, in which he urges them to settle down in Babylon under the blessing of Yahweh, illustrates a similar monotheistic thrust. This contrast between the archaic and the modern views of space and time will be more clearly seen in the following sections of this study.

This study is based upon the presupposition that the ritual and mythology of archaic man are to be understood as man's existential response to his condition of complete involvement in the universe rather than to detached theological speculation. By contrast modern man, having lost this sense of identification, is tempted to consider his ritual important only as a dramatic expression of his theological formulations. The concept is divorced from the ceremonial drama in a way unknown to the primitive. Nevertheless, E. O. James has pointed out that even for modern religious man that which is really permanent is the ritual.[1] Beliefs and religious interpretations are subject to constant change, but the ceremonial forms remain.

Despite this, until recently, even anthropologists considered ritual to be a product of detached speculation on the part of the primitive. But now, according to James, "it is generally agreed that in primitive society it is the sacred actions performed that are all-important inasmuch as it is by the due performance of the prescribed cultus that sacred power is made operative."[2] This does not deny archaic man's mental ability. It is simply an assertion, fundamental to this study, that primitive man, to his credit, was unable to separate concept from action.

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[1] James, "The Sacred and the Secular . . .," p. 78

[2] Ibid.

Definition of Terms

Contemporary Continental emphasis upon hermeneutics teaches us that a given word or text must be allowed to speak for itself. This parallels Heidegger's insistence,[1] following Husserl,[2] that our approach to reality must be phenomenological. As a philosophical and theological method, the phenomenological approach corresponds to the empirical procedure in natural science.[3] The subject matter "shines forth" to us. We are not to obscure it with our own speculation or preconceived ideas.

If the above describes a valid method of investigation, a fruitful approach to primitive man's understanding of his relationship to the world in which he lives lies in a careful study of words, both in their etymology and subsequent meanings, as a key to the origin and development of ideas. It must be remembered, however, as Gray has observed that "the continued use of terminology is not in itself proof that the ideas that created it also maintained themselves."[1] Nevertheless, etymons, in their root meanings, are useful in helping us to understand man's relationship to his environment at a certain stage of his history. In order to ascertain the precise meaning of words at any stage, however, lexicographers must compare all shades of meaning by collecting as many examples as possible.[2]

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[1] The authoritative voice of the "later Heidegger" is found in Heinrich Ott's work, Denken und Sein (Zollikon: Ev. Verlag, 1959).

[2] Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (New York: Macmillan, 1931).

[3] The etymology of the word "phenomenon" suggests this method. Its basic meaning in Greek, according to W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), is "shine, give light, be bright."

We shall expect the root meaning of a word to suggest a personal confrontation with life. This presupposes as a working hypothesis that for the primitive, man and nature are not to be distinguished in terms of the personal and the impersonal. Primitive man sees himself as involved in a personal confrontation with the universe.[3]

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[1] Gray, Sacrifice . . ., p. 56.

[2] This, in essence, is the method of Albright. Cf. From the Stone Age . . ., pp. 46-48.

[3] Cf. H. Frankfort et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 3-26. Frankfort suggests that for ancient man nothing was inanimate. Even nature is addressed as "thou," but the "thou" is known only as "he" makes himself known to man.

This is not to be confused with animism as popularized by Tylor, Religion . . .. Animism would teach that primitive man personifies inanimate phenomena in order to explain them. It presupposes a detachment of which, according to the above hypothesis, early man was unaware.

Altar

The Hebrew word, מזבח (*mizbeaḥ*), is derived from the verbal form זבח (*zabaḥ*), the basic meaning of which is "slaughter for sacrifice, for eating or in divine judgment."[1] The substantive form then, translated "altar," is literally "the place of slaughter."[2] With the exception of *ʾarʾiel* which is translated "altar hearth,"[3] and of *miqṭar*, "the altar of incense,"[4] there is no other Old Testament word for altar. This indicates that the etymological meaning of *mizbeaḥ* does not adequately explain its usage. This is supported by Gray's observation that "the altar became the place where sacred victims were burnt rather than where they were slain, and even the place where inanimate offerings that never could have been slain, were burnt."[5]

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[1] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (eds.), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1907; reprinted with corrections in 1959), pp. 256-258. Henceforth reference to this volume will be abbreviated BDB.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 258.

[3] Cf. Ezek. 43:15, 16.

[4] Cf. Exod. 30:1; II Chron. 30:14.

[5] Gray, *Sacrifice . . .* , p. 97. Cf. Exod. 40:29.

The altar, conceived as a microcosm, is described in Indian literature,[1] and there is evidence to support the theory that this was the basic significance of its architecture among certain other peoples.[2] In this sense its construction repeats the cosmogony in sacred mythical time. An investigation of Old Testament evidence bearing on this theory with reference to the nomadic period will be worked out in Chapter III of this study.

Sacrifice

There is no single Hebrew expression equivalent in its breadth to our term "sacrifice." Its derivation is Latin from the word sacrificium which in turn is made up of two separate words: sacer (sacred) and ficare (to make).

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[1] With reference to this, Eliade in Cosmos and History, p. 78, writes: "Each Brahmanic sacrifice marks a new creation of the world (cf., for example, Satapatha Brahmana, VI, 5, 1 ff.). Indeed, the construction of the sacrificial altar is conceived as a 'Creation of the world.' The water with which the clay is mixed is the priordial water; the clay that forms the base of the altar is the earth; the side walls represent the atmosphere. Furthermore, each stage in the building of the altar is accompanied by verses in which the cosmic region that has just been created is explicitly named."

[2] For evidence for this among the Babylonians and the Hebrews see Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 40.

This derivation and its meaning are described by Yerkes as follows:

> From the beginning it [sac] denoted the relation of certain physical objects or acts to invisible and intangible powers for weal or woe, by which primitive man regarded himself surrounded. . . . Any object which had been given to a god by repetition of prescribed words and with a prescribed ceremony was called sacer.
>
> . . . .
>
> The original connotation of sacrifice was first any ceremonial act to or in the name of a god; later it might refer to the thing upon which the act was centered. Latin was the first language to coin a blanket term to describe all such offerings or acts.[1]

In the light of its derivation the English word "sacrifice" is a very inclusive term in that it denotes that which would demand several words in either Hebrew or Greek.[2] However, due to secularization, the word no longer expresses adequately that which its derivation would suggest. Sacrifice, as popularly used, is not offered to anyone. It simply means that one renounces or destroys something valuable in order "that something more valuable may be obtained."[3]

The following study of Hebrew words covered by the English translation "sacrifice" is limited to those expressions which were probably in use during the nomadic period or illustrate practices relating to it.

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[1] Yerkes, Sacrifice . . ., p. 6.

[2] Ibid., p. 7.

[3] Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

The most common term found in this literature is זבח (*zebaḥ*). Its most commonly accepted meaning is as follows:

> " . . . the common and most ancient sacrifice, whose essential rite was eating the flesh of the victim at a feast in which the god of the clan shared by receiving the blood and fat pieces. In the older literature it is distinguished from מנחה and עלה, in the later literature from חטאת and אשם.[1]

Since eating of flesh among the ancient Hebrews was a religious experience, this word in its verbal form is the expression used to describe both the slaughter for sacrifice and for eating. Such sacrifices were always eaten by those who offered them except for the part claimed by the priest, the fat, kidneys and part of the liver placed on the altar,[2] and the blood, most of which was poured at its base.[3] *Zebaḥ*, then, is the common term for festal sacrifices.[4] Of these there were several kinds. The sacrifice offered by Jacob and Laban was in celebration of a pact or a covenant.[1] J and E speak of the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover.[2] I Samuel 1:21; 2:19 and 20:5 tell of an annual sacrifice which probably corresponds to the Feast of the Booths.[3]

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[1] BDB, p. 257.

[2] Lev. 3:14-16; 8:16.

[3] Exod. 24:6, 8; Lev. 8:15.

[4] Gen. 31:54; Exod. 12:8, 27; 18:12; etc.

Animal sacrifices in the literature reflecting the nomadic period are divided into two main classes: זבח (zebaḥ) and עלה (olah). The latter is from the verbal root alah which means "go up, ascend, climb," and in its substantive form "that which goes up."[4] The usual translation is "whole burnt offering." To be consistent our translators should render both zebaḥ and olah either as "sacrifice" or as "offering." The olah is distinguished from the zebaḥ in that it is wholly burned on the altar.[5] No part of it is eaten by the offerer.[6] The possible significance of the root meaning of this word for this study lies in the description of the altar as a center of communication between heaven and earth.[1]

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[1] Gen. 31:54.

[2] Exod. 12:27 (J); 34:25 (JE).

[3] Cf. George B. Caird, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," The Interpreter's Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), II, 881.

[4] BDB, pp. 748-750.

[5] Cf. Exod. 29:10-18 and Lev. 1:3-14. The hide and that which could not be adequately cleansed was burned outside the camp.

[6] Exod. 29:18.

A synonym for *ʿolah*, commonly found in the D and P sources is כליל (kalil).[2] Its verbal meaning is "complete, perfect."[3] As a sacrifice it is concerned with whole offerings. Although through the LXX and the Vulgate the English translation is "holocaust" or "whole-burnt offering," there is nothing in the derivation of the word to suggest the concept of burning. The root meaning, suggesting completion or perfection, may be significant with relation to the chaos-order motif struggle and the repetition of the cosmogony as discussed in Chapter III of this project.

שלמם (*shelamim*), usually plural, is often translated "peace offerings."[4] Its verbal form means "be complete, sound."[5] There are three references to these offerings in the Ugaritic account of Keret.[6] The probable meaning, in accordance with Deuteronomy 37:35, is unrelated to the idea of slaughter. According to Snaith, it is best translated "recompense."[1]

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[1] Cf. Chap. II of this project.

[2] Deut. 33:10; Lev. 6:15.

[3] BDB, p. 483.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 1023. See Exod. 24:5; I Sam. 11:15.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 1022.

[6] Cf. *Keret* I, iii, 26; I, v, 35; and I, vi, 4.

מנחה (minḥah) is an early generic term. The derivation has been long disputed, and no final conclusions can be made. Some have sought its origin in the verbal form naḥah, "lead, guide,"[2] or from an Arabic root meaning "lend, give a gift."[3] W. W. Fisher has suggested that it may be from nuaḥ, "rest, repose."[4] This could relate to the state of wholeness or peace which results from having made an offering. It is generally related to grain offerings, never to animals in an exclusive sense.[5]

The Sacred

Because "the sacred" is always considered with reference to an experience of that which transcends the human plane, it is hardly subject to definition. To define the sacred would demand the use of negatives.[6] Otto speaks of the numinous as a "category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion."[1] He considers it to be the non-ethical non-rational factor in the idea of the divine which eludes apprehension in terms of concepts.[2] If this is true, it follows that the sacred can be studied only as a religious phenomenon.

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[1] Norman H. Snaith, "Sacrifices in the Old Testament," Vetus Testamentum, VII, No. 3 (July, 1957), pp. 308-317.

[2] Gray, Sacrifice . . ., p. 15.

[3] BDB, p. 585.

[4] Personal interview, August, 1961.

[5] See Snaith, "Sacrifices . . .," p. 316.

[6] Cf. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p. 3.

Modern man in so far as he claims to understand the sacred has lost it. It is for this reason that an investigation of the meaning of the sacred must begin with the believer. It is here that the importance of Otto's investigations lies. He tried to analyze "the modalities of religious experience."[3] He reacted against the scholastic emphasis on the rational and the speculative with relation to God and religion.

Our problem with a definition concerns this overwhelming experience with a power greater than man for which he can find no adequate human analogies.[4] The sacred (Latin derivation) or the holy (Anglo-Saxon) must always be described in terms of an experience with that which is greater than man, viz., the *mysterium tremendum*.[5]

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[2] *Ibid*.

[3] As suggested by Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 8.

[4] Cf. Isa. 40:18.

[5] Otto, pp. 25-30.

The Hebrew word which corresponds to this category of the holy is קדוש (qadosh). The verbal root may be translated "be set apart, consecrated, be hallowed by contact with sacred things, and so tabooed from profane use, or forfeited to sanctuary."[1] Other derived meanings include a place name probably meaning sanctuary;[2] temple prostitutes, both male and female;[3] and another substantive form meaning apartness or sacredness.[4]

The Profane

The word "profane" is derived from Latin *profanus* which literally means before (*pro*) the temple (*fanum*), i.e., that which is outside of the temple. It is thus considered antonymous to the sacred.

For religious man only that which participates in the sacred is meaningful. The profane lacks both reality and meaning. Yet archaic man, despite his attachment to that which is sacred, is never completely free from the profane. For both the profane and the sacred there are degrees of intensity depending upon one's proximity to the sacred center with relation to space and time.[5]

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[1] BDB, pp. 872, 873.

[2] Gen. 16:14; Numbers 13:26; Josh. 20:7; etc. The MT makes a distinction in the pointing for the two sites suggested by these references.

[3] Cf. Deut. 23:18; also Gen. 38:21, 22.

[4] *qodesh*.

[5] Cf. below, p. 131.

By living in sacred time and sacred space man is able to relate himself to archetypal actions. It is for this reason that he desires to live in or near a center conceived as the point of creation and of communication between the cosmic spheres. Only there can he find power, reality and being.[1] The profane, therefore, with relation to actions, has reference to those which have no archetype. With relation to space, it is that which is unpossessed, far from a center, and, in a sense, chaotic and uncreated. This study will investigate the establishment of centers and the possession of new territory with regard to sacred manifestations and the repetition of the creation struggle through sacrifice.[2]

There is a sense in which the profane is always potentially sacred. The unpossessed may be possessed. The chaotic may become ordered. The uncreated may be created. The sacred can only manifest itself in objects that belong to the natural profane world.[3]

Eliade has noted that the sacred and the profane represent "two modes of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history."[1] Archaic man lives in a sacralized cosmos. By contrast modern man, even though he may achieve a certain religiosity, lives, for the most part, in a desacralized world.[2] He carries on his activities in profane space and time. His actions, for lack of primeval patterns, lack sacred meaning.

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[1] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 12.

[2] Cf. Chaps. II and III.

[3] Eliade, p. 11.

In the literature reflecting the nomadic period, due perhaps to archaic man's degree of integration with the cosmos and his preoccupation with what he considered reality with reference to the sacred, a descriptive verbal contrast between the sacred and the profane does not occur. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this contrast was an important part of the patriarchal world view.[3] Within the priestly writings, however, elements of which may reflect ancient traditions,[4] we find this contrast more clearly expressed.[5] Its clearest Old Testament verbal expression is found in Ezekiel.[6]

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[1] Eliade, p. 14.

[2] Cf. Eliade, p. 13.

[3] This is illustrated by the erection of altars in the act of taking possession of new territories in response to a sacred manifestation. See Chaps. II and III of this study.

[4] See below, p. 31, footnote.

[5] Cf. Lev. 10:10.

[6] Ezek. 22:26.

The term which corresponds to the concept of the profane in the Hebrew Bible is חל (*ḥol*) from the root (*ḥalal*) which means "pollute, defile, profane."[1] Its basic agreement with the Latin *ad profanum* is shown in its use as an exclamation with *He* locative. With reference to the destruction of the righteous with the wicked in Sodom, Abraham exclaims: "Far be it (*Ḥalilah*) from thee to do such a thing."[2] The sons of Jacob use the same expression in their response to the accusation of Joseph's servant with regard to the cup of divination.[3] These are J sources. The usage here suggests a sense of alienation on the part of the *ḥol* from that which is meaningful and true.

At this point the question may be asked whether primitive man can view anything as profane if he lives in a completely sacralized universe. The answer is found in his preoccupation with that which he views as sacred. Were the profane not a constant threat in terms of the struggle with chaos, why this overwhelming interest in identifying himself with the primeval patterns as suggested by his myths and rituals and his longing to live in territory hallowed by the erection of an altar or sanctuary? Eliade, after stating that anything whatever can become at any given moment an element in the sacred, deals with this problem of the sacred-profane dichotomy as follows:

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[1] BDB, p. 320.

[2] Gen. 18:25.

[3] Gen. 44:7.

> The contradiction is, in fact, only a surface one, for while it is true that anything at all can become a hierophany, and that in all probability there is nothing that has not, somewhere, some time, been invested with a sacred value, it still remains that no one religion or race has ever been found to contain all these hierophanies in its history. In other words, in every religious framework there have always been profane beings and things beside the sacred.[1]

Nevertheless, one must always bear in mind that for the primitive that which alone has true existence is the sacred for it alone is freed from chaos.

Hierophany

This is a term coined by Eliade[2] and limited in its meaning to its etymological content. It is literally (from the Greek) a sacred manifestation, i.e., a manifestation of the numinous. It is closely parallel to the word "theophany" which is usually employed in Biblical studies. "Theophany," literally a manifestation of God, is usually understood with reference to Yahweh. For this project "hierophany" is a more useful term because it can apply to any type of sacred manifestation with reference to the numinous including those which, because of their character, cannot be subsumed under the category of "theophany."

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[1] Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 12.

[2] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 11.

Hierophanies show great variety. With regard to their multiplicity Eliade states:

> We must get used to the idea of recognizing hierophanies absolutely everywhere, in every area of psychological, economic, spiritual and social life. Indeed we cannot be sure that there is anything--object, movement, psychological function, being or even game--that has not at some time in human history been somewhere transformed into a hierophany.[1]

It follows that every sacred manifestation takes place through objects which are in themselves profane. Within some definite situation, through a hierophany, they are made channels for an expression of the numinous. However, we do archaic man an injustice if we limit the numinous to the profane object through which it is manifested. This was the weakness of Tylor's theory of animism. A stone may be venerated not because it is a stone, but because it has been the channel of a manifestation of the numinous which transcends it and gives it a new dimension.[2] The same is true of an idol--the rapprochement of the sacred and the profane.

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[1] Eliade, Patterns . . ., p. 11.

[2] Cf. Gen. 28:10-22.

Sacred Time

For archaic man a specific hierophany is in reality a manifestation of something which has existed from the beginning. This is because of his concept of the cyclical nature of time which makes it possible for all that is meaningful in life to have taken place in the same primordial period in the actions of the gods, the culture heroes or the ancestors of the race. "In one sense," writes Eliade, "it could almost be said that for the man of archaic societies history is 'closed'; that it exhausted itself in the few stupendous events of the beginning."[1]

This attitude would appear to preclude progress or even change. However, primitive man finds change possible, if not easy, by projecting the hierophany manifesting the innovation to the same primordial mythical period in which all of his meaningful activities are rooted. Because of this innovations are soon "invested with all the prestige of the primordial revelations."[2]

Sacred time, therefore, is primordial time, the period of the beginning which is made present through liturgical acts which operate within a cyclical frame of reference. Religious celebrations, such as the New Year Festival,[1] are a means through the imitative magic of cosmic drama by which life on all levels is renewed through the regeneration of time. All creation returns periodically to its original mythical moment. Eliade explains the erection of an altar and the offering of sacrifice as rites of renewal because in these acts the cosmogony is repeated.[2] Old Testament evidence in support of this interpretation will be found in Chapters II and III of this study. Under this concept of liturgical renewal, history is periodically abolished. Its terror becomes non-existent because nothing significant is new.

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[1] Mircea Eliade, Birth and Rebirth, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. xi.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xii.

As suggested above,[3] the people of Israel were probably the first ethnic group to transcend, at least in part, this cyclical view of time and discover promise and fulfillment on a linear plane. They were able to do this through the prophetic interpretation of history which recognized the activity of Yahweh in terms of events leading toward a future goal as opposed to a periodic abolishment of time and a renewal in terms of a mythical beginning.

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[1] Cf. Hooke, Myth and Ritual, pp. 1-14.

[2] Eliade, Cosmos and History, pp. 77-80.

[3] P. 5.

Eliade would emphasize that for primitive man, despite his longing for the sacred, time is not homogeneous.[1] All that occurs without religious meaning takes place in profane time and space. To make the transition from one kind of time or space to another involves danger and demands certain rites.[2]

Sacred time partakes of the numinous. It transcends the purely human. It provides a break from the mundane. It is eternal. As circular, it is the basis for the myth of the eternal return.

Sacred Space and the Symbolism of the Center

In perfect correspondence with sacred time for religious man is the concept of sacred space. Deeply aware of the non-homogeneity of space, archaic man desires to live always in the realm of the sacred. He fears unknown areas which are uninhabited or which are peopled with foreigners because they afford no point of orientation. Such space for him is chaotic.

Sacred space, quite as much as sacred time, is dependent upon hierophany. Man cannot choose it. This manifestation of the numinous always occurs in the center of the world, the place of creation and the point of communication between heaven, earth, and the underworld. The center may be the cosmic mountain, a sacred tree, a temple or sanctuary, a stone, or some other object. The normal response to a hierophany is the erection of an altar and the offering of sacrifice.[1] This suggests the cosmogony with its accompanying cosmic struggle.

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[1] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 68.

[2] See Chap. V of this project.

Through the concept of mythical time the hierophany occurs at the sacred original mythical moment of creation. This suggests that this space, revealed as sacred through a manifestation of the numinous, has never lacked a sacred character. The center, therein revealed, is always assimilated to the point of creation. Due to the fact that all centers coalesce in the one cosmic center of creation, the multiplication of centers presents no problem. This is in keeping with the tendency of primitive man to identify the representation with that which it represents.

As we shall observe in this project, evidence for this concept of sacred space abounds in the Old Testament literature. Each patriarchal altar represents a "taking-possession" of new territory in response to a hierophany.[2] Such "taking-possession" can probably be identified with the cosmogony. This is illustrated by the Biblical identification of Mount Zion with the cosmic mountain, the

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[1] As suggested by Eliade, p. 32.

[2] See pp. 41-98 of this study.

the point of creation, the center of the world, and the sacred space to which all nations are to direct their loyalty.[1]

A center is both a psychological and a religious necessity. It fulfills the need for a place of orientation. It suggests an organizing principle which gives purpose and meaning to life.

The following summary description of the symbolism of the center is from Eliade:

> Here, then, we have a sequence of religious conceptions and cosmological images that are inseparably connected and form a system that may be called the 'system of the world' prevalent in traditional societies: (a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space; (b) this break is symbolized by an opening by which passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld); (c) communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images, all of which refer to the *axis mundi*: pillar (cf. the *universalis columna*), *ladder* (cf. Jacob's ladder), mountain, tree, vine, etc.; (d) around this cosmic axis lies the world (=our world), hence the axis is located "in the middle," at the "navel of the earth"; it is the Center of the World.[2]

Through these concepts, apparently universal for traditional societies, man shows his need for identification with the cosmos in order to find meaning in his existence. Without this relationship life promises only the cycle of birth, growth, reproduction, suffering and death, and history, as it moves, holds only terror. Modern secular man has lost the security of archetypal repetition in sacred time and sacred space. He has also lost the meaning for existence offered by the Old Testament prophets in so far as he fails to see purpose or goal in the historical process. Perhaps the insights of archaic man have something to teach us today.

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[1] See Pss. 48:2; 74:2; 125:1; Isa. 2:1-7; Micah 4:1-3; and Isa. 40:9.

[2] Eliade, p. 37.

Source Material

With the exception of some illustrative material from other parts of the Bible and from the contribution of archaeology,[1] our only literary source for a study of the culture pattern of the nomadic period[2] is the Hexateuch and some related passages in Judges, Ruth, and I Samuel. However, with the exception of some isolated poetical passages,[3] most of this literature in its present form is from a much later period and is the result of compilations of oral traditions, conflations, and redaction.

Two basic questions are relevant. (a) How faithfully do these written records transmit the oral traditions upon which they are based? (b) To what degree are these oral traditions reliable reflections of the culture pattern of the nomadic period? The difficulty in giving conclusive answers to these questions is evidenced by the lack of unanimity of interpretation on the part of Biblical scholars.[1] In answer to them no general statement can be completely satisfactory. Each pericope must be judged on its own merit. Such a study must consider the possibility of etiological, eponymous, legendary, and anachronistic elements.

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[1] With reference to such discoveries as those of Tell el Amarna, Ras Shamra, Mari, Nuzi, etc.

[2] Previously defined as the period extending roughly from the migration of Abraham through the early conquest.

[3] See Numbers 21:17, 18; Gen. 4:23, 24; 9:24-27; and Exod. 15.

For this project it is not necessary that the basic historicity of each unit of tradition be established. It is necessary only to point to these units as reliable reflections of practices and concepts dominant during that period. However, if they are capable of communicating these elements of the cultural configuration of the Israelite nomadic era, it is reasonable to presuppose the existence of historical elements as well.

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[1] Robert H. Pfeiffer, as shown by his book entitled Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 150, is representative of those who see serious modifications of the oral tradition due to the patriotic and religious emphases in the later periods of transmission.

On the other hand, Albright, as suggested by his book From the Stone Age to Christianity, pp. 64-76, places great confidence in certain aspects of the oral tradition because of the many ways in which archaeological discoveries have confirmed its validity.

The Scandinavian school of traditio-historical criticism, through its emphasis upon the growth of traditions as a living process, has made an unusual contribution to this area of study. Cf. A. Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament (4th ed.; Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1958).

How faithfully do these written records transmit the oral traditions upon which they are based? Careful critical analysis has postulated the existence of four principal sources for the literature of this period, viz., J, E, D, and P.[1] These, with their distinctive points of view, demonstrate that compilers and redactors were capable of modifying the oral tradition, but the tenacity of these pericopes, as documented by Albright,[2] precludes drastic changes other than those suggested by interpretation.[3]

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[1] J, the Yahwist epic, and E, the Elohist, represent respectively the traditions of the South and of the North. Both date from the period of the early monarchy. Both represent the point of view of their authors or compilers.

The Deuteronomist source, D, is in its nucleus probably from the period antedating the exile. By promising material reward and national well-being in return for faithful obedience to the demands of Yahweh, it sharply colors the tradition which it records.

P, codified in the sixth or fifth century B. C., represents the priestly point of view. Its inclusion of units of tradition such as the call of Moses, the Passover, the Exodus, the Red Sea Crossing, and the arrival at Sinai, pointing back to the nomadic period makes it a possible source for this project. In this regard, Albright, in his work From the Stone Age to Christianity, p. 252, writes: "The Priestly Code is also important as an historical source for the Mosaic period. It is very different in character from the older J and E, but, in contrast to them, it belongs to a scribal circle which was interested in questions of chronology and topography, ritual and liturgy, and which unquestionably had access to early written records."

[2] Albright, p. 73.

[3] As, for example, the etiological element.

Recording these traditions helped them, in their oral form, to retain their content and literary character.[1] The fact that at times two or more sources transmit the same unit of tradition suggests the basic validity of the pericope, i.e., it is established by more than one witness.[2] The success which the redactors experienced in conflating the various documents or traditions demonstrates the existence of a core of unity around which it was possible to build a unified account.

To what degree are these oral traditions faithful reflections of the culture pattern of the nomadic period? Here, again, we find disagreement. Form critics in tracing the units of oral tradition insist upon placing them in their Sitz im Leben. Little attention is given to the problem of the basic historicity of these pericopes since, generally speaking, it is felt that this cannot be demonstrated. It is for this reason that the form critics, of whom Hermann Gunkel[3] and Martin Dibelius[4] were pioneers, placed their major emphasis upon etiology.

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[1] In other words, the existence of written records would, on the part of the literate, provide a check and a correction for the oral transmission of these traditions.

[2] An example of this is the story of the plagues, a narrative showing evidence of J, E, and P.

[3] Hermann Gunkel, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903).

[4] Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Scribners, 1935).

Without underestimating the etiological factor in the Sitz im Leben of the periods of compilation, to make this element all-embracing or even dominant reckons without a living tradition which produced the raw material for the supposed etiology. Therefore, the attribution of the origin and development of oral tradition exclusively to this element, at the expense of other religious, national, and moral values, appears unfair.

Eponymous and anachronistic elements also create problems in our effort to recapture the culture pattern of the nomadic period. However, anachronisms are usually easily isolated. And eponyms, if they are of nomadic origin, tell us that the people of this epoch were concerned with meaning in relation to past events. In the framework of this study we may suggest that this concern may be related to primordial archetypes and the desire for identification with the ancestors and culture heroes of the clan.

Eliade, in his study of Roumanian folklore, has explained how historical persons and events take on the quality of myths in popular memory, often within a very few years.[1] Popular memory retains the hero and his acts but modifies the biographical data in terms of well-known norms. It converts them into traditionally accepted archetypes, i.e., mythological patterns credited to the gods or culture heroes. But once this identification is established, it permits only a minimum of deviation from generation to generation.

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[1] Eliade, Cosmos and History, pp. 34-48.

As to form, poetry, because of the ease with which it is memorized and retained, provides the most reliable transmission of oral tradition. Allowance must be made, however, for modifications contingent upon the need for clothing the tradition in poetic form. Legal formulae, too, due to their stereotyped pattern, permit faithful transmission.[1] This is illustrated by a comparison of the Covenant Code of Exodus 20:22-23:33 with the Code of Hammurabi. They reflect a common background. Prose, however, presents more difficulties because folkloristic elements are more easily assimilated. Nevertheless, as Albright notes, these can often be detected through a study of comparative mythology and folklore and the use of archaeological and linguistic tools.[2]

With reference to archaeological data relevant to the nomadic period, the Mari archives provide background material for the period of the early patriarchs.[1] The Nuzi tablets support many elements in the patriarchal literature in their description of parallel incidents and customs.[2] Tell el Amarna throws light upon the political and social conditions of Palestine preceding the conquest.[3] The Ugaritic materials reveal to us a much clearer picture of the culture and religion of the Canaanites during the period in which the Hebrew patriarchs entered Palestine.[4]

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[1] Cf. Albright, From the Stone Age . . ., p. 66.

[2] Ibid., pp. 70-76.

For this study it is important to note that from the standpoint of religion the Hebrew nomadic period is not a unit. It must be divided into at least two parts, viz., the patriarchal and the Mosaic.[1] The patriarchal narratives of Genesis point to a great similarity between early Hebrew religion and that of the Canaanites.[2] The differences which did exist were probably due to the nomadic character of the patriarchs. Because of their dependence upon flocks and herds they show less interest in the fertility of the soil in relation to the deity.

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[1] In language, culture, and religion the Hurrians (Biblical Horites) had much in common with the region of Haran which was, at least for a time, the home of both Abraham and Jacob. Cf. Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, pp. 46, 47.

[2] For example, incidents paralleling the Genesis account with regard to adoption (Gen. 15:2-4), handmaids (Gen. 16:1-15; 30:1-3, 9-13), relation of adopted son to true son (Gen. 29-31, especially 31:1), and household gods (Gen. 31:19, 30-35). See Finegan, pp. 54, 55.

[3] Revealing a state of near anarchy and the problems with invading waves of Habiru. See George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th ed. rev.; Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1937), pp. 25 ff.

[4] Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1949). This material shows Israel's debt to Canaan with regard to literary form, music, architecture, weapons and agriculture. It also gives us a picture of the religious pattern of the agricultural peoples and helps us to understand the Old Testament opposition to its basic framework.

The close relationship existing between the deity and each patriarch has been discussed by Albrecht Alt.[3] He notes that in each case there is a special theophany, personal in character, which relates the deity to the patriarch. Thus the Old Testament speaks of the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.[4] These appellations suggest an interest in history which seems to be characteristic of nomads who must seek validity from the past for their strong clan solidarity upon which their survival depends. By contrast, the Canaanite agricultural population, largely dependent upon the fertility of the soil, interpreted its religion within the framework of the cycle of nature.

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[1] S. H. Hooke in "Myth and Ritual: Past and Present," Myth, Ritual, and Kingship, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 14, distinguishes three strands in the religion of Israel during this period: the patriarchal, the settled tribes who may have not gone down into Egypt, and the Mosaic of wilderness origin.

[2] Cf. James Muilenburg, "The History of the Religion of Israel," The Interpreter's Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), I, 295, 296.

[3] Albrecht Alt, Der Gott der Väter, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1929).

[4] Exod. 3:6.

It is this interest in history and clan which provides the bridge for the transition from the religion of the patriarchs to that of Moses. According to our records, which on the basis and within the limits of the above discussion one must consider trustworthy, Mosaic religion placed its emphasis upon the historical hierophanies as witnessed by Yahweh's great acts of deliverance and revelation rather than upon periodic renewal.

This is not to deny the great contributions of the eighth century prophets to the development of Israel's religious thought. Nor dare we overlook the constructive part played by the cross-fertilization of culture in relation to the civilization of Canaan. Israel learned much from Canaan,[1] and in many ways her religious development suggests a synthesis of the Mosaic and the Canaanite.[2]

However, on the basis of our sources, any fair evaluation must place Moses in a key position in the religious and civil development of the nation of Israel. The great prophetic literature supports this statement. Many of the prophets shared the conviction that the nomadic pattern, i.e., the Mosaic, represented the ideal.[1] This is illustrated by Amos' background[2] and his call for a renewal of the fellow feeling and justice practiced by Israel's nomadic ancestors.[3] It is the basis for Hosea's opposition to the monarchy and his preference for a charismatic leadership.[4] Although Isaiah loved Jerusalem and seems to show preference for urban life (in that he, apparently, hardly ever left the city), he, too, emphasizes the type of human relationships found in the nomadic period.[5] The same stress is found in Micah.[6] In terms of comparative religion it may be said that the prophets of the eighth century called the people back to the nomadic sky-god religious orientation as opposed to the Canaanite agricultural deities with their emphasis upon immanence and fertility.

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[1] An interesting account of this debt is found in G. E. Wright and F. V. Filson, The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 33.

[2] This is the thrust of E. A. Leslie in his Old Testament Religion in the Light of its Canaanite Background (New York: Abingdon Press, 1936).

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[1] Perhaps idealized because of the distant past.

[2] Amos 7:14, 15.

[3] Amos 5:10-15. Cf. Louis Wallis, Sociological Study of the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912).

[4] Hosea 8:4; 11:3-4; 12:9.

[5] See especially chaps. 2-5.

[6] Micah 6:6-8.

Ruth Benedict has shown how certain cultures provide a pattern which enables gifted individuals to rise to their opportunity and provide for the cultural enrichment of their community.[1] This fits both Moses and the prophets. Both built upon earlier foundations.

Israel under Moses, at Sinai, entered into a covenant with a deity whose personal name has nothing in common with the pantheon of Canaan. Yahweh stands alone, without family connections.[2] He is lord of the cosmic forces, yet he is not identified with them.[3]

The difference between the religion of Genesis and that of Exodus as supported by the Biblical records is a strong argument in favor of the reliability of our sources.[4]

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[1] Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1948; first published in 1934), pp. 218-240.

[2] Ludwig Köhler, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), p. 3, states: "Der Gott des AT ist Einer, ist Person, ist Mann, wird für einen Mann gehalten (Gen. 18) und handelt wie ein Mann, aber diesem Mann steht keine Frau zur Seite. Gott hat keine Göttin neben sich."

[3] This emphasis in Hebrew religion is made evident in the story of Elijah at Sinai, I Kings 19. The concept of the symbolism of the center suggests that the mountain is the channel of communication between heaven and earth. For this reason one must reject Pfeiffer's insistence that Yahweh was simply the god of the storm or of a sacred mountain. Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction . . ., p. 327. Passages such as Ps. 46 which suggest a greater degree of immanence probably owe this emphasis to their poetic form.

[4] As suggested by Muilenburg, "The History of the Religion of Israel," The Interpreter's Bible, I, 296.

The natural tendency on the part of compilers and redactors would lead them to erase these differences. Obviously, the tenacity of the oral tradition would not permit this.

We may conclude from the study of oral tradition that with regard to trustworthiness each unit must be considered on its own merit with careful consideration of the etiological, eponymous, and anachronistic elements involved. Studies of the dynamics of oral tradition by Albright[1] and others[2] in the light of the great amount of archaeological data now available point to the reliability of our sources as the basis for our understanding of the culture pattern of the nomadic period, but we must exercise due caution because of the complexity of the literary material and its formation at the hands of compilers and redactors.

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[1] Albright, From the Stone Age . . ., pp. 64-76.

[2] Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), I, 13 ff.

CHAPTER II

THE ALTAR AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTER IN SACRED SPACE AND SACRED TIME

We have seen that the center is the heart of sacred space and the channel of communication between the cosmic planes. Moreover, since it finds its true origin in the primordial mythical past its location does not rest on man's choice. It must be revealed to him.[1]

When such a hierophany occurs in the nomadic period, the usual response is to build an altar. This construction, according to the hypothesis which is being investigated in this study, is identified with the creation of the universe. In this chapter, however, inquiry will be limited to the relationship of the center of hierophany and altar in the literature which reflects the life of the Hebrew nomads.

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[1] Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites, p. 115, makes the following statement: ". . . new sanctuaries can be formed and new altars or temples erected, only where the godhead has given unmistakable evidence of his presence."

Genesis 1-11

This account of pre-history, of composite origin (J and P) and clearly related to Babylonian mythology, is subsumed under the title "Old Testament Nomadic Period" because it records traditions which were probably brought by the patriarchs from Mesopotamia.[1] The creation and flood accounts show close parallels with their Babylonian counterparts,[2] and they reflect no known Canaanite mythologies.[3] The J narratives in this section undoubtedly represent elements of the earliest Hebrew oral tradition, and, as we have seen, elements in P, too, are built upon ancient tradition.[4] Therefore, because of evidence of great antiquity on the part of certain of these narratives[5] and the possible transmission of ancient religious concepts, this section provides an important introduction to the more historical nomadic period toward which our attention is directed in this project.

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[1] Cf. G. Ernest Wright, Biblical Archaeology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 40-52. Beside the obvious parallels with reference to the creation and the flood, there is also the argument from place and personal names of Gen. 11, names which relate to the Haran area. Customs revealed in the Nuzi Tablets, *ibid.*, p. 43, support the Biblical record of Mesopotamian origins.

[2] George A. Barton, Archaeology . . ., pp. 279-336.

[3] Wright, p. 45.

[4] Cf. footnote above, p. 31.

[5] Such as the creation and flood accounts.

The Garden in Eden

The story of the Garden in Eden is rich with suggestions of sacred space and the symbolism of the center, The garden itself suggests perfect order, the antithesis of the chaotic unpossessed space which primitive man fears. The Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil provide a vivid portrayal of the center as the point of orientation.

The Tree of Life is probably a reflection of the Babylonian longing for immortality[1] which is described as an obsession in the Gilgamesh Epic.[2] The quest for immortality is a search for meaning within the context of the sacred. The sacred in time and space, because of its relationship to the numinous, enables man to transcend the transitory character of his life by means of identifying himself with the cyclical regeneration of nature. This is possible only within the center. Without a center in sacred space man knows only profane existence in chaotic space where periodic renewal is no longer a possibility.

The Eden saga, however, places major emphasis upon the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. A study of the nature cult pattern of the Near East points to the center as the point of maximum fertility.[1] Through imitative magic, acts of fertility carried out at the central shrine regenerated man, beast, and field. In our narrative the knowledge of good and evil which this tree provides is related to an awareness of sexuality.[2] The man and woman, conscious of their nakedness, clothe themselves with fig leaves.[1] This awareness of sexual fertility with relation to the center suggests that it is also the point of creation. Human procreation of life is the counterpart of the divine creation.

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[1] Because of the vicissitudes of life in terms of drought, flood, and storm, life in Mesopotamia was much more precarious than in Egypt where nature seemed more stable and death could be pictured as an easy transition into the world-to-come.

[2] Cf. Barton, Archaeology . . ., pp. 327 ff.

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[1] See C. J. Gadd, "Babylonian Myth and Ritual," Myth and Ritual, ed. S. H. Hooke, pp. 56 ff.

[2] Cf. Robert Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVI (June, 1957), pp. 123-138. Gordis points out how the phrase "the knowledge of good and evil" also carried sexual connotations in 1QSa according to the text found in D. Barthelemy and J. Milik, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), I, 108. Column I:9-11 reads in Gordis' translation: "He shall not come near to a woman, in order to have sexual relations with her, until his completing twenty years, when he knows good and evil."

Gordis suggests that the two trees represent two roads to eternal life, viz., immortality for the eater (as in the Gilgamesh Epic) and vicarious immortality through the procreation of children (also suggested in the story of Gilgamesh). He considers this a merism with reference to the entire range of sexual experience, both normal and abnormal (cf. Gen. 19:5; Judges 19:22). With regard to sexual immaturity in terms of lack of knowledge, note Deut. 1:39 where the sexually immature are permitted to enter the land. On the other hand Barzillai, II Sam. 19:36, refuses to accept David's invitation to live at the court because he was too old for such "knowledge."

For a criticism of Gordis' thesis, cf. Herold S. Stern, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," Vetus Testamentum, VIII, No. 4 (Oct., 1958), pp. 405-418. He believes that the knowledge referred to in this context includes far more than simply sex. It would include all that made Adam godlike. The connotation which would make this phrase exclusively sexual is, according to him, late.

We may conclude that the sexual element in this narrative is surely present. This does not preclude other elements of human knowledge.

Another point of evidence, illustrative of a center with relation to Eden, is the reference to the four great rivers which found their source in this sacred area. Simpson suggests that these may have reference to the Ganges and the Nile in addition to the Tigris and the Euphrates.[2] We may conjecture that the author had in mind the four points of the compass.

Cain and Abel

This narrative is concerned with the polemic between the nomad and the farmer in which the victory of the latter is depicted despite a pronounced bias in favor of the former.[3] An altar center is implied in that offerings are brought to Yahweh. Cain, the farmer, suffers the punishment of alienation from the sacred center. He expresses his terror as an exile from the face of the ground (פני האדמה) and from the face of Yahweh (פני יהוה).[1] Both expressions suggest the symbolism of the center. Cain, departing from this center, the face of Yahweh, lived in the land of Nod (נוד).[2]

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[1] Gen. 3:7.

[2] As suggested by C. A. Simpson, "The Book of Genesis," The Interpreter's Bible, I, 495.

[3] The etiological factor in these stories is carefully worked out by Cyrus Gordon, Introduction to Old Testament Times (Ventnor: Ventnor Publishers, 1952).

The expression "the face of Yahweh" is very suggestive of the divine presence in sacred space and of man's desire to remain as closely as possible to the center. Eliade notes that "every religious man places himself at the Center of the World and by the same token at the very source of absolute reality."[3]

With reference to the phrase "the face of the ground" (פני האדמה), as illustrative of a center in this context and throughout this section, it is of value to compare it with the contrasting expression, also common to these chapters, "the face of the whole earth" (פני כל-הארץ). A careful study of the occurrence of these two expressions in Genesis 1-11 reveals that the former (the face of the ground) refers to a tract or territory related to a center, a sacred place where orientation is possible, whereas the latter (the face of the whole earth) implies the vastness of the unknown, and for primitive man the chaos inherent in that of which he has not taken possession. The expression "the face of the ground" is used with reference to the land watered by the mist[1]--the sacred space where the Lord God formed man and planted a garden. The same expression describes the possessed territory where man lived in Genesis 6:1. At the time of the flood this is the phrase used to refer to the ordered territory which God had created and from which man was to be removed by means of the chaotic destructive waters.[2] Again, when the waters subsided, the same words are descriptive of the renewal of order at the highest point--the center.[3]

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[1] Gen. 4:14, 16.

[2] Three derivations are possible for this word: נוד, to move to and fro; נדד, retreat or wander; נדה, put away or exclude. (Cf. BDB, pp. 622, 626). In any case it connotes meaninglessness, lack of purpose or orientation, a profane non-religious life.

[3] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 65.

The contrasting expression "the face of the whole earth" reveals, without exception, the chaotic unpossessed space which primitive man fears. Its use with reference to the flood and the Tower of Babel supports this meaning.[4]

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[1] Gen. 2:6.

[2] Gen. 6:7; 7:4, 23.

[3] Gen. 8:8, 13.

[4] Simpson, p. 542, considers the expression "the face of all the earth" to be a gloss in Gen. 7:3. This, however, does not appear conclusive. Unpossessed or abandoned profane space was the abode of wild animals (cf. Isa. 13:20-22). The next verse, which seems to support the text as it stands, depicts the imminent destruction of sacred space--"the face of the ground." Cf. Gen. 8:9 which suggests that all was chaos outside the ark.

With reference to Babel, Gen. 11:4 reflects the fear

These two expressions, viz., "the face of the ground" and "the face of the whole earth," carry distinctive meanings closely related to, and highly illustrative of, the concept of a center in sacred space.

The Deluge

This narrative, with its striking parallels to the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh,[1] in its present form is usually credited to a redactor who "conflated the J recension with that of P."[2]

The ark provided a floating center in the midst of a world of complete chaos--a return to the primeval waters of the undifferentiated pre-creation state.[3] Eric Burrows describes the tehom[4] as a "malignant element, the primeval abyss, the source of the great flood."[5] It is usually recognized as the Hebrew equivalent of the Babylonian Tiamat

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of unpossessed profane space. Gen. 11:8 suggests the chaotic condition of their profane unorientated existence in that "the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."

[1] Barton, pp. 327-331.

[2] Simpson, p. 451.

[3] Cf. Gen. 1:2.

[4] Gen. 7:11.

[5] Eric Burrows, "Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion," The Labyrinth, ed. S. H. Hooke (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), p. 55.

who is often described as the sea dragon.[1] The construction of the ark in response to the divine plan revealed to Noah in a hierophany may be compared to the cosmogony.

When the waters had abated, another hierophany revealed the presence of a center among the mountains of Ararat.[2] There Noah built an altar and offered sacrifice.[3] Order was re-established in accord with the divine promise.[4] The Hebrews were capable of seeing Yahweh's power in the ordered sequence of the seasons as well as in catastrophe.

A rabbinic tradition insisted that Palestine, the highest of all lands, was not covered by the waters of the flood.[5] Later Biblical references also allude to the centrality of Jerusalem and Palestine[6] and the victory of Yahweh over the flood.[7]

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[1] This, according to Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, p. 51, is no longer exclusively held. "Tiamat is explicitly called a woman in the myth (Tablet II, line 111) and she and Apsu became the mother and father of the gods."

[2] Gen. 8:4.

[3] Gen. 8:20. This is usually considered a J source. P awaits the Sinaitic hierophany before mentioning altars.

[4] Gen. 8:21, 22.

[5] Qiddus in 69a, quoted by Burrows, p. 54.

[6] Cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3; also Ezek. 38:12 in which the inhabitants of Palestine are said to dwell at the "navel of the earth.

[7] The theme of Ps. 93 is Yahweh's power over the floods (cf. Ps. 29:10).

The Tower of Babel

As it stands, this J account provides an excellent example of a human attempt to establish a center without the prerequisite hierophany.[1] As we have seen, however, man cannot choose the center where the deity is actively present. This presence antedates man. It demands a sacred manifestation. The result of this human attempt was chaos and confusion with no center for orientation. Mankind was scattered "over the face of all the earth."[2]

J, in Genesis 11, derives the name "Babel" from balal, meaning "mingle, mix, confuse, or confound."[3] In Assyrian the cognate is written Bab-ili, literally "gate of God," an expression suggestive of a sacred center and quite in keeping with the desire to make a "tower with its top in the heavens."[4]

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[1] Notice the repetition of the cohortative plural in vss. 3 and 4: "Come, let us make bricks, and let us burn them thoroughly. . . . Come, let us build ourselves a city, . . . and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

[2] Gen. 11:9. Also see above, pp. 46-48, where this expression is compared with "the face of the ground."

[3] BDB, p. 93.

[4] Gen. 11:4.

The Patriarchal Period (Genesis 12-50)

The centers described in this section are nearly all dominant in the later history of the Hebrews. Each had its traditions which provided etiological material for its archetypal establishment and consequent legitimation.[1] In the normal pattern a hierophany is followed by a "taking-possession" symbolized by the construction of an altar,[2] the erection of a pillar,[3] the planting of a tree,[4] or even the digging of a well.[5]

This pattern is not followed in the account of the initial hierophany of Genesis 12:1-3. This preceded the taking possession of the entire land promised to Abram. Having taken place in Haran (or Ur?) it did not manifest a specific center. But it promises such a manifestation upon Abram's arrival.[6]

Not unlike the future prophetic vision of the centrality of Palestine,[7] not only for the Hebrews but for a world civilization, we find here, in J, an incipient universalism.[1]

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[1] According to Albright, From the Stone Age . . . , p. 241, these traditions of etiological value are much older than the written records. He writes: "So many corroborations of details have been discovered in recent years that most competent scholars have given up the old critical theory according to which the stories of the Patriarchs are mostly retrojections from the time of the Dual Monarchy (9th-8th centuries B. C.)."

[2] Gen. 12:7. [3] Gen. 28:18. [4] Gen. 21:33.

[5] Gen. 26:25. Cf. Gen. 16:7; 21:19.

[6] Gen. 12:1--". . . to the land that I will show you."

[7] Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3; Isa. 49.

Shechem

At Shechem, Abram's first stop in the land of Canaan, it is revealed to him through a hierophany that the oak of Moreh is a center.[2] As the narrative stands, this oak or terebinth was there upon Abram's arrival. He did not plant it as he later planted a tamarisk.[3] Not all oaks were necessarily centers or shrines. To be established as such demanded a manifestation of the numinous.

The probable gloss of verse six with regard to the Canaanites may mean to suggest that this was a Canaanite center before Abram's arrival. For the original compiler, however, due to its importance in the literature of the Hexateuch, Shechem is portrayed as a religious center for which Abram, and he alone, is responsible.

In accord with the usual procedure the erection of an altar follows the hierophany. Abram, through this act, takes possession of the land and now has a center for orientation.

Shechem became an important center in later Hebrew history. Jacob, as Abram before him, made Shechem his first stop upon returning from Paddan-aram.[1] The erection of an altar by Jacob on this occasion suggests a problem in that an altar once established should not be re-established. Perhaps the name which Jacob gives to this altar provides a partial solution, viz., *El-Elohe-Israel*.[2] It points to an E document. J consistently follows the pattern of never duplicating the erection of an altar in a given place even though another hierophany occur.[3] The construction of an altar, in this case a duplication, may suggest a less primitive idea in which man's recognition of traditional shrines is an act of piety.[4]

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[1] Gen. 12:3b.

[2] Gen. 12:6.

[3] Gen. 21:33.

However, E may not be responsible for the statement that an altar was erected on this occasion. Many scholars feel that the word altar (*mizbeaḥ*) in this passage is a gloss and that the original word was pillar (*maççebah*). The verb *yaçab* is never used with reference to an altar in other passages. Moreover, since it is the root form from which *maççebah* (pillar) is derived, it seems likely that originally the reading was pillar instead of altar.[5]

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[1] Gen. 33:18.

[2] Gen. 33:20.

[3] Cf. Gen. 13:3, 4. Between Bethel and Ai where Abram had previously built an altar (Gen. 12:8), he "called on the name of the Lord."

[4] As suggested by W. W. Fisher, Sept., 1961.

[5] According to Simpson, p. 732, Wellhausen was the first to suggest this and he is followed by most modern commentators.

If this is the solution to the problem of the duplication of the altar, it does not necessarily invalidate that which was suggested above with relation to the E source--the passage is from E. The gloss, however, in which altar is substituted for pillar because of its deeper religious significance may well be the reflection of a later period when the erection of an altar was viewed as an act of piety rather than a normal response to a manifestation of the numinous for the purpose of the establishment of a center.

The importance of the Schechem center is revealed by the Book of Joshua. It records no battles in this area. Yet it was at Schechem that all Israel congregated to pledge their mutual loyalty to Yahweh.[1] Perhaps it was a center for a Hebrew clan which had never lived in Egypt or had returned on the occasion of the burial of Jacob or the expulsion of the Hyksos.[2]

The Altar between Bethel and Ai

The etiological basis for the center at Bethel is more fully developed with reference to Jacob where the numinous character of the site is revealed by means of a hierophany.[1] In Genesis 12:8 and 18:3, 4, the J writer links it with Abram without relating this site to a special manifestation. Simpson considers this silence to be the result of the work of J^2 who represents Jacob as the real founder of this sanctuary. However, unable to ignore completely the fact that J^1 has connected this shrine with Abram, he simply deletes all reference to hierophany.[2] Given the careful description of the altar location--"to the mountain east of Bethel"[3] and "between Bethel and Ai"[4]--it would seem reasonable that the author is attempting to avoid a repetition of altar construction. In Genesis 28 the center is specifically Bethel.

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[1] Joshua 24:1-28. See especially vs. 26.

[2] This is treated fully by Wright and Filson, The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, pp. 39, 40.

In this connection, Brownlee, in a book soon to be published based on the Genesis Apocryphon of the Dead Sea Scrolls, offers an explanation.[5] The Apocryphon speaks eloquently of Abraham's panoramic view of the promised land from Ramoth Hazor, the highest point in the Bethel area. However, when J was compiled, the probable name for this point was Baal Hazor--suggesting a Baalistic shrine. J, therefore, makes a conscious effort to avoid a location which would identify Yahweh with Baal by placing the patriarchal altar on another less spectacular height. This was no problem for the author of Aramaic account. At the time of his writing Baalism was no longer a threat. For that reason he "could shift the scene of the divine promise given Abraham back again to Hazor in order to give the patriarch the best possible view in the neighborhood of Bethel."[1]

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[1] Gen. 28.

[2] Simpson, p. 579.

[3] Gen. 12:8.

[4] Gen. 13:3c.

[5] William H. Brownlee, The Meaning of the Scrolls for Bible and Religion. Since this work is in manuscript form, page numbers cannot be cited.

It is of interest to note that on the occasion of the separation of Abram and Lot,[2] Abram was able to retain the possessed territory where a center was established and orientation was possible. Lot, perhaps anticipating a new hierophany which would permit him to take possession of the land through the erection of an altar, chose the fertile but wicked valley. The result for Lot was chaos. No sacred manifestation occurred. No center could be established.

Hebron

Abram, by contrast, receives a new hierophany in which he is promised the land "northward and southward and eastward and westward."[3] This sacred manifestation provides the etiology which legitimizes the center at Hebron.

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] Gen. 13:8-13.

[3] Gen. 13:14c.

The presence of oaks (or possibly an oak[1]) as symbolic of the center corresponds to the oak of Moreh in the previous chapter. The text suggests that Hebron is a later name for this location.[2]

Genesis 18 records another hierophany at this location. The center, however, is established. No new altar is erected.

Simpson[3] considers the hierophany of Chapter 13 to be an insertion into the J^2 material. He believes that the sacred manifestation to be associated with the altar at Hebron is that of Chapter 18. This appears awkward, however, in that it would permit the erection of an altar before the occurrence of the hierophany.[4]

Chaos in Egypt

For the Hebrews the land of Egypt suggests chaos. No patriarchal hierophany legitimized the presence of a sanctuary there. Abram built no altar. Trouble plagued both him and his descendants during their sojourn there.

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[1] Rudolf Kittel (ed.), Biblia Hebraica (7th ed.; Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1951), p. 17, footnote on Gen. 13:18, suggests the possibility of the singular as in the Syriac and the LXX.

[2] Gen. 13:18; cf. Numbers 13:22.

[3] Simpson, pp. 588, 589.

[4] This would be reasonable if in the original J material Chap. 18 followed 13:18 immediately.

They could not take possession of the land although the hierophany in Beersheba[1] in which God promised to be with Jacob made it endurable. Only much later, in accord with a growing universalism, could a prophet speak of "an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border."[2]

The Elephantine papyri reveal the presence of a Jewish temple in Egypt on "an island at the First Cataract of the Nile"[3] at the time of Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in 525 B. C. Worship was probably very syncretistic.[4] Rowley also calls attention to a later temple, dating from the second century B. C., built by a high priestly family at Leontopolis in Egypt.[5]

During the nomadic period, however, there was no center in Egypt for communication with Yahweh. It remained an unpossessed land of chaos. No theophany permitted the erection of an altar.[6]

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[1] Gen. 46:1-5.

[2] Isa. 19:19.

[3] Barton, p. 486.

[4] According to H. H. Rowley in "Papyri from Elephantine," Documents from Old Testament Times, ed. D. Winton Thomas (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1958), p. 257.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 257, 258.

[6] It is evident that Moses had to be outside of Egypt to receive his great hierophany. Yet, presumably, God was with the Israelites in Egypt. Perhaps the symbolism of the "pillar of fire and of cloud" offers a solution as an ambulatory center since this cloud appeared

Beer-lahai-roi[1]

In Genesis 16:7-15 (J) and in Genesis 21:15-21 (E) the center sanctified by a hierophany is a well. These narratives explain the origin of this ancient desert shrine which is associated with Isaac who lived there after the death of Abraham.[2]

Given the three level cosmology of ancient man, viz., heaven, earth, and nether regions, it appears natural to see in springs and wells a channel of communication with the underworld, just as mountains suggest a link with heaven. Robertson Smith has noted that "sacred wells, in connection with sanctuaries, are found in all parts of the Semitic area."[3] He also notes that where "all ground watered by fountains and streams, without the aid of man's hand, was regarded as the Baal's land, a certain sanctity could hardly fail to be ascribed to every source of living water."[4]

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while they were still in Egypt (cf. Exod. 14:19). The angel of God was in the cloud, in fact identified with it. Perhaps, too, this attitude would permit an analogy to a foreign king who might make periodic incursions into foreign territory for the good of his own people without ever taking possession of it.

[1] Our author gives vivid expression to Hagar's experience of the numinous in this passage by this name which translated means "the well of the living one who sees me." Cf. Gen. 16:13, 14.

[2] Gen. 25:11. [3] Robertson Smith, p. 167.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Beer-sheba

As the records stand, both Abraham and Isaac are associated with this center. The older J^1 recension, according to Simpson,[1] attributes this shrine to Isaac whereas J^2 and E link it with Abraham. The account which relates Abraham to this center carries no description of a hierophany although the swearing of an oath presupposes the presence of the deity.[2] The tamarisk tree which Abraham planted viewed in conjunction with the well suggests a center symbolism which links the earth at this place with both the underworld and heaven--an axis mundi.[3] Isaac's association with this center suggests full possession.[4] In response to a hierophany he built an altar.

Moriah (Jerusalem)

This narrative[5] in its present form[6] attributes to Abraham the establishment of the sacred center where the

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[1] Simpson, p. 641.

[2] Gen. 21:22-34.

[3] With relation to the cultic significance of certain trees see W. W. Fisher, Isaiah and the Nature Cults (Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1938), p. 68.

[4] Gen. 26:23-33.

[5] Gen. 22:1-19.

[6] Here again scholars conjecture that there is an earlier stratum which identified Moriah with Moreh (Shechem) and, probably, related it to some hero other than Abraham. Cf. John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (2d. ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930), pp. 328, 329.

Temple of Jerusalem finally stood.[1] Besides the etiological value in providing patriarchal justification for the Jerusalem center in later Israel, there is here another example of the formula: hierophany--altar.

Bethel

According to Genesis the establishment of the sanctuary center in Bethel for which Jacob is responsible need not be identified with the Abrahamic shrine located on the mountain "between Bethel and Ai."[2]

The intensity of this hierophany, ranking with Genesis 15 and Isaiah 6, is made evident by the words of Jacob: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."[3] Otto notes how this primal numinous awe is sufficient to mark out sacred places.[4]

Formerly, scholars interpreted this passage in terms of Tylor's theory of animism,[5] a vestige of the belief that the numen inhabited the rock and that oil, as an offering, provided food.[1] The symbolism of the center, however, given the modern tendency for scholarship to reject the adequacy of the animistic hypothesis,[2] appears to provide a more promising solution. This would mean that the stone, although described as the house of God, did not confine the deity, for it was also the gate of heaven, i.e., a channel of communication where God was present but in which he was in no sense confined.

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[1] Cf. II Chron. 3:1. "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite."

[2] Gen. 12:8; 13:3.

[3] Gen. 28:17. Burrows, p. 53, notes that here the imagery is that of worshippers ascending the stairs of a Mesopotamian ziggurat, but the point is that the center is not in Ur or Harran. The gate of heaven is in Israel.

[4] Otto, p. 126. [5] Cf. Tylor, The Origins of Culture.

This point of view enables us to accept the literal meaning of the word Bethel (house of God) as opposed to the common view that this was the name of a local deity,[3] or a numen turned nomen.[1] The name Bethel speaks clearly of the symbolism of the center and of sacred space in which the deity is present, but as a center it suggests that the dimension of transcendence is not absent. The ladder reached to heaven.

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[1] Thus Oesterley, Sacrifices . . . , can write, p. 163: "The presence of the deity in a standing stone is amply borne out by the Bethel episode . . . in addition to the anointing of the sacred pillar indwelt by the god, blood was poured out at its base for his benefit."

Also Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites, notes on p. 204: ". . . the pillar itself, not the spot on which it stood, is called the 'house of God,' as if the deity were conceived actually to dwell in the stone, or manifest himself therein to his worshippers."

[2] For a discussion of this rejection, compare the following: Eliade, Patterns . . . , pp. 6, 7; James, Prehistoric Religion, pp. 204 ff.; and Frankfort, The Intellectual Adventure . . . , pp. 5, 6.

[3] Cf. W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), p. 42, in their statement: "Jacob takes one of the stones of the place and uses it for his head to rest on while sleeping; it is owing to his contact with this stone that he dreams, and thus recognizes that it is the abode of a god, a bethel."

It follows, then, that the numinous presence of which Jacob was aware is not animistic. The theory of animism fails to take seriously the sky-god concept[2] and the primitive cosmology which relate the deity to certain centers because these points permit communication with the other cosmic planes.

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[1] In this regard Otto, p. 127, notes that the numen need not be named to be worshipped. The experience is basic and precedes explanation.

[2] The Vienna school of ethnology, under the leadership of Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, has probably made the greatest contribution in the study of this concept. A survey of his work is published in English under the title The Origin and Growth of Religion, Facts and Theories, trans. H. J. Rose (New York: MacVeagh Dial, 1931).

Cf. also Eliade, Patterns . . . , p. 38, where he observes: "What is quite beyond doubt is that there is an almost universal belief in a celestial divine being, who created the universe and guarantees the fecundity of the earth (by pouring rain down upon it)." On p. 109 he notes that these Supreme Beings and sky gods tend to disappear from the cult. They become remote. Yet when conditions demand, their assistance is sought.

Among the Babylonians, Anu, of Sumerian origin, is the Supreme Being. When addressed in the Code of Hammurabi he is given titles such as "Sky God," "Sky Father," and "Sky King." Cf. Eliade, p. 65.

The overarching providence in the Ugaritic literature is El, the Merciful, who grieves over Baal's death, rejoices when he is made alive, and is described as "the creator of created things." Cf. D. Winton Thomas (ed.), Documents from Old Testament Times (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd.), pp. 130, 131.

Upon returning from Paddan-Aram Jacob experienced another hierophany[1] to which he was to respond by the construction of an altar at this spot where previously he had erected a pillar.[2] This suggests, in the present arrangement of the narrative,[3] the complete establishment of the shrine.

In this chapter there may also be an effort to identify the site of Deborah's tomb with that of the Bethel experience.[4] She was buried "under the oak below Bethel."[5] This would imply that all elements of a Canaanite high place or center were present, viz., altar, pillar, and sacred tree.[6]

The repetition of the erection of a pillar supports the theory of the composite origin of this narrative. The fact that the final redactor or compiler permitted a reference to a pillar in this context shows that, in his understanding, the erection of both an altar and a pillar as well as the presence of a sacred tree presented no problem of repetition in the ceremony of the establishment of a sacred center.

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[1] Gen. 35:1.

[2] Gen. 28:22; cf. 35:14.

[3] Chap. 35 is attributed to E and P. Chap. 28 is considered a compilation of J^2 and E. Cf. Simpson, pp. 688 and 738.

[4] Cf. Simpson, p. 739.

[5] Gen. 35:8. Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 24, suggest that the name of the oak, Allon-bacuth, was derived from the practice of "weeping for Tammuz" at this center.

[6] Cf. Deut. 16:20; II Chron. 14:3.

Mizpah

The hierophany which Laban experienced preceding his encounter with Jacob may legitimate the establishment of this "watch-post" shrine--the boundary between Israel and Syria.[1] In this center the deity is present for the purpose of maintaining the peace. To tread this sacred ground for the purpose of inflicting harm on the other party is taboo.

The account is composite in origin,[2] but both J and E present imagery depictive of a center. In E the center is established by the erection of a pillar. The compiler seems to suggest a connection between the name *Mizpah* and the Hebrew word for sacred pillar, *maççebah*.[3] The meaning of *Mizpah*, watchpost or outlook point,[4] suggests the presence of the deity at this point.

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[1] Gen. 31:24.

[2] Cf. Harlan Creelman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 32.

[3] There is a similarity in meaning between the two verbal roots. *Maççebah* is derived from *naçab* which means "take one's stand, stand." The root form of *Mizpah* or *Miçpah* is *çaphah* whose meaning is "look out, keep watch." Cf. BDB, pp. 662, 859.

[4] BDB, p. 859.

The fact that the J tradition calls this point Galeed, because of the "heap of stones," is suggestive of an altar, especially in the light of the Sinaitic legislation prohibiting the use of hewn stones.[1] This is supported by the common meal, a part of the covenant procedure,[2] celebrated in sacred space.

Tombs as Centers

Although there is little direct evidence in the literature of the Old Testament relating to the nomadic period which would associate burying places with the symbolism of the center, there is good reason to suggest that this was central in their attitude toward life and death.[3] Albright has shown that bamah (high place) in Ancient Palestine can designate funerary installations as well as pagan sanctuaries.[4]

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[1] Exod. 20:24-26.

[2] Cf. Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), I, 136. He writes: "Der Bund ist also ein Rechtsverhältnis, und er enthält die stärkste Garantie für ein menschliches Gemeinschaftsverhältnis. Demgemäsz wurde er mit feierlichen Riten, Anrufung Gottes, einem sakralen Mahl, einer Selbstverfluchung usw. eingegangen."

[3] The evidence is more conclusive for Egypt and Mesopotamia. Frankfort, p. 21, notes how the creator emerged from the waters of chaos on a mound of dry land, the primeval hill, with which royal temples and tombs coalesced. Cf. also James, Prehistoric Religion, p. 47.

[4] W. F. Albright, "The High Place in Ancient Palestine," Vetus Testamentum, Suppl. Vol. IV (1956), pp. 242-258.

Cave burial was practiced for Sarah, Abraham, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob. James observes that this type of disposal of the dead may have suggested "the widespread belief in a subterranean land of the dead since caverns appear to lead into the depths of the earth."[1] The practice of placing food and utensils in the tombs, a procedure shared by Israel,[2] suggests a passageway to the abode of the dead--a channel connecting at least two cosmic planes.[3]

Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, was buried under a sacred oak which, as we have noted, is symbolic of a center.[4] The erection of a sacred pillar in the case of Rachel's death[5] is further evidence for the possibility of relating tombs to centers.[6]

The death of Aaron[7] and Moses[8] on the height of a mountain peak suggests the symbolism of the center with relation to death which permits access to the highest cosmic plane.

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[1] James, p. 118.

[2] Barton, p. 222.

[3] Even for modern man the space occupied by a cemetery seems qualitatively different, not unlike the sacred space of a more archaic culture.

[4] Gen. 35:8.

[5] Gen. 35:20.

[6] Modern tombstones, although considered nothing more than memorials, may relate to this center symbolism.

[7] Numbers 20:28.

[8] Deut. 34:1-8. Although, apparently, Moses died on the mountain, his burial was in the valley. This ability,

Mosaic Period and Early Conquest

The Mountain of God

The repetition of hierophany and altar in relation to this center suggests both the composite origin of the Exodus account and the intense numinous quality associated with the "Mountain of God" in the mind of the compiler.[1]

The Book of Exodus, described by Rylaarsdam as "a record of both an oral and a literary history,"[2] is not the product of a single period of time. J, E, and P are usually distinguished. Although modern scholarship tends to emphasize the oral traditions lying back of J and E, antecedent literary forms for these sources are not ruled out. The compilers probably had access to both oral and written elements. Written documents, although few in number, are important because of the control which they

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on the part of primitive man, to consider any point, even though not on a height, as the highest point is explained by Burrows, pp. 54, 55, on the basis of Joachim Jeremias' observations. He writes that the answer is found in the Babylonian cosmology "in which the earth was a sort of hemispherical dome-shaped mountain rising from the cosmic ocean. A point assumed to be at the centre of such a hemisphere was almost necessarily its highest point, whatever might be the height above sea-level of mountains distant from the centre."

[1] Theophanies: Exod. 3, 19, 24. Altars: Exod. 24:4 and 32:5.

[2] J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus, Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, I, 833.

exercise over the oral tradition. Albright observes that "a difference often exists between the reliability of oral tradition in regions or periods where writing was known, even though sparingly used, and where it was not in use at all."[1]

Buber, in contrast to many modern scholars, considers the nineteenth century source document hypothesis inadequate. In an effort to go beyond the documentary hypothesis he proposes that this material represents "a reworking of tradition, which in the course of the ages, experienced various kinds of treatment under the influence of differing tendencies."[2] He prefers to treat each Biblical narrative as a unit. By separating the early elements from later accretions, he attempts to grasp the meaning of the most ancient tradition within a consistent culture pattern. Due to the fact that Old Testament literary investigation has probably advanced nearly as far as it can, Buber's contribution relating to culture and meaning appears promising.

Martin Noth, in tracing the traditions of the sacred confederacy of the twelve tribes, finds them grouped around three main themes, one of which is the experience at Sinai. Although recognizing that the Sinaitic tradition is derived from an actual event, he doubts the ability of scholarship to establish its historical background and content.[1] The reason for this uncertainty stems from the similarity of the renewal of social bonds on the occasion of the Canaanite autumn festival with the Sinaitic emphasis.[2] The evidence for the basic historicity of this "Mountain of God" experience, however, appears strong. In the first place, the solidarity of the Israelite tribes on the basis of a covenant relationship with Yahweh in their ancient amphictyonic character points to an experience early in their history to which they could constantly refer.[3] Moreover, Moses' own experience of a hierophany at Sinai and his relationship to this region during his years of exile would understandably lead him to this sacred center for the formation of these tribes into a theocracy.

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[1] Albright, From the Stone Age . . . , p. 72.

[2] Martin Buber, Moses (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 8.

Our records have either perpetuated two names for this "Mountain of God," or they refer to two distinct mountains. Most scholars favor the former hypothesis.

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[1] Martin Noth, The History of Israel, trans. Stanley Godman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 127.

[2] Cf. Rylaarsdam, p. 834.

[3] Joshua 24.

Horeb is considered the characteristic name used in E and D. J and P prefer Sinai.[1] McNeile, however, believes that two mountains are involved.[2] He interprets the traditions related to Sinai as pointing to a region to the west of the Gulf of Aqabah while Horeb appears to be on the east. Since Deuteronomy, however, in its exclusive use of the name Horeb,[3] identifies it with the events J and P connect with Sinai,[4] the identification of the two names with reference to the "Mountain of God" is ancient, and the use of two names may be attributed to differences in the early oral traditions.

Three possibilities have been suggested for the origin of the place-name Sinai:[5] the Accadian Sin (the moon-god worshipped at Ur and at Haran); the desert plain which carried the name Sin; and the thorn bush seneh.

According to Buber, although the name Sinai does not appear until the tribes reach the "Mountain of God," nevertheless, the name is carefully echoed in Exodus 3:1-5 by the three-fold repetition of seneh--thorn bush.[6] In this well-planned literary framework, Horeb is the preferred name for the mountain in the pre-Sinaitic period, but the more cultic name, Sinai, is carefully anticipated. This is consistent with Buber's emphasis upon taking each complete narrative as a unit of tradition with little interest in the documents in terms of J and E. The weakness of this hypothesis lies in its inability to account for later usages of the term Horeb in E and D. However, the proposed relationship between the two words seneh and Sinai is supported by I Samuel 14:4 where seneh becomes the name of a cliff.

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[1] Cf. BDB, p. 696.

[2] A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus (2d ed. rev.; London: Methuen & Co., 1917), pp. cii-cvi; also p. 16.

[3] Deut. 1;2, 6, 19; 5:2; 9:8; 18:16; 29:1.

[4] Such as the Covenant, the Tables of the Law, and the numinous character of the mountain itself.

[5] Albright, From the Stone Age . . . , p. 263.

[6] Buber, Moses, p. 352.

Horeb is derived from a verbal root meaning "be dry, dried up,"[1] according to the generally accepted etymology. This is supported by the aridity of the region between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah. Nevertheless, given the numinous character of this mountain where Yahweh is revealed as power, would it not be more fitting to relate this name to the word for sword, חרב, consonantally the same word? One might even relate it to the cosmic sword suggested by flashes of lightning.[2] A place-name linked with such intense numinous experiences should reveal something of the quality of sacred space. Horeb, in its traditional derivation, implies nothing distinctive. If, however, the term can be identified with sword, especially the cosmic sword, its connection with a hierophany is immediately made clear. This finds further support in the fact that the bush was burning.[1]

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[1] BDB, p. 352.

[2] Cf. Gen. 3:24; Deut. 32:41; Isa. 34:5, 6. With relation to the experience of Balaam, see Numbers 22:23, 31.

As in the case of Jacob's numinous experience so here also scholars have suspected a vestige of animism.[2] This suggestion is not supported by the text. Yahweh describes himself as having come down to deliver his people out of the hand of the Egyptians.[3] There is no reference to the bush as the permanent abode of the deity in the sense that he was limited to it. The concept of the center, clearly pictured in the narratives of the "Mountain of God," precludes Yahweh's confinement to bush or mountain. It was here at the axis mundi that he was able to communicate with Moses.[4]

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[1] Exod. 3:2, 3. Cf. W. Robertson Smith, p. 194, where he states: "The apparition of Jehovah in the burning bush belongs to the same circle of ideas as His apparition in the thunders and lightnings of Sinai."

[2] Cf. Rylaarsdam, p. 871; also Otto, p. 74.

[3] Exod. 3:8.

[4] Thus Buber, p. 43, notes: "YHVH never appears in the tales of his revelations to Moses and Israel as 'fixed' on Sinai; he only comes down thither on occasion descending from heaven to do so." Also see Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 230, 231.

It is on this occasion that E, according to the documentary hypothesis, introduces the divine name, Yahweh, as the new revelation given at this holy mountain.[1] For premodern man, far more than for us,[2] a name expresses character. Name and essence are very closely related.[1] The important element in this manifestation is the character of the God who bears this name.

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[1] Although it does not fall within the scope of this project to discuss the meaning of the Tetragrammaton, it is of interest to note that in the text it is associated with היה (Exod. 3:14, 15). On this basis, Albright, *From the Stone Age . . .*, pp. 259, 260, insists that its form is causative--literally "he causes to be." With equal dogmatism Buber, *Moses*, p. 50, derives it from the pronominal form הוא (he). However, since pointing postdates the period in which the name was pronounced, it is impossible to be certain of either its meaning or pronunciation. Cf. also S. D. Goiten, "YHWH the Passionate. The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name YHWH," *Vetus Testamentum*, VI, 1 (Jan., 1956), pp. 1-9.

Otto, p. 75, makes a distinction between the appellations Yahweh and Elohim in the sense that the former is richer in numinous content. This may not have been true originally, but it was certainly the case in the later period, *ca.* 250 B. C. (cf. Pfeiffer, *Introduction . . .*, p. 95), when, because of its numinous character, the divine name was no longer pronounced.

G. von Rad, *Theologie . . .*, I, 182, warns us rightly against reading into the manifestation of the divine name any metaphysical definitions. He writes: "Nichts liegt dieser Etymologie des Jahwenamens ferner als eine Definition des Wesens Jahwes im Sinne einer philosophischen Seinsaussage etwa als Hinweis aufseine Absolutheit, Aseität o. ä. Das wäre völlig unalttestamentlich."

[2] Yet this is not foreign to us. The fact that a given name does not always seem to fit the character of a person and that a more expressive name is substituted familiarly suggests that the relationship of name to character is still very close.

In response to the Sinaitic hierophany, according to Exodus 24:4, Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also erected twelve pillars--one for each tribe.

Robertson Smith believed the rude stone pillar, the *maççebah*, to be the more primitive form of the altar.[2] With the evolution of the altar, the pillar remained because the altar was unable to assume the full function of the pillar. This *maççebah* (pillar) in time, as symbolic of the deity, was carved to become an idol.

With relation to Robertson Smith's theory it is conceivable that the pillar, the form of which may suggest an *axis mundi*, is the older element in the establishment of a shrine. As descriptive of the channel of communication between heaven and earth, it may be symbolic of the presence of the deity. The altar, a later element according to this hypothesis, could then be a portrayal of the cosmogony in the act of its construction and of the cosmos in its completion.[1]

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[1] Buber, p. 51, aptly observes: "The 'true' name of a person, like that of any other object, is far more than a mere denotative designation for men who think in categories of magic; it is the essence of the person, distilled from his real being, so that he is present in it once again. What is more, he is present in it in such a form that anybody who knows how to pronounce it in the correct way can gain control of him."

[2] W. Robertson Smith, pp. 203, 204.

However, in the passage cited,[2] the pillars represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the altar typifies the deity. Yet, even here, the concept of the center provides a solution. The pillars, as portrayals of the *axis mundi*--the channel of communication between heaven and earth, participate in both the divine and the human. In the same way, the altar, as the place of communion around which God and man meet for the sacred meal, is representative of both.

In the nature cults the pillar became symbolic of the masculine principle. As such it paralleled the feminine *ʾasherah*.[3] Unless Exodus 24:4, however, is interpreted as a reflection of a later period, the nature cult motif does not provide an adequate explanation for the existence of these pillars. The nomad, although doubtless concerned with animal fertility, had little need for the fertility rites of the agricultural shrines. The legitimate Sinaitic center, as described in Exodus, relates exclusively to nomadic religion against the background of the threat of the nature cults.[1] Instead of reading fertility cult imagery into this passage, it seems clear that here, as in the case of Jacob and Laban,[2] the pillars speak of Yahweh's presence as a witness. In this sacred space he is present in the celebration of the covenant.[3] The stone circle, suggested by the description of the pillars around the altar, is rich with the imagery of the center and its labyrinthic defense.[4]

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[1] See below, pp. 104, 105.

[2] Exod. 24:4.

[3] This male-female polarity with reference to Baalistic centers is described by Oesterley and Robinson, pp. 124, 125. There is one instance in the O. T. in which the stone is feminine and the tree or wood masculine, viz., Jer. 2:27. Nature cult imagery is clear in this case.

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[1] See below, pp. 78-80, where the prohibitions of Exodus 20:24-26 are explained in relation to the polemic against nature cults. The desert location of the Sinaitic center also points to its nomadic character. With relation to the Golden Calf narrative of Exod. 32, with its strong fertility imagery, it may be interpreted as an expression of southern opposition to the Bethel and Dan shrines (I Kgs. 12:28-33). However, if contemporaneous with Moses, i.e., a type of flock or herd fertility emphasis, it was still an illegitimate expression of worship because Aaron built an altar (Exod. 32:5) for which there was no justification in terms of a hierophany. If the second commandment is accepted as early, Aaron's act represents a deviation from the Sinaitic norm. On this point, however, scholars are not in agreement (cf. Albright, pp. 265, 266).

[2] Gen. 31:48, 52.

[3] Buber, p. 111, compares this story with Elijah on Mt. Carmel (I Kgs. 18). The twelve stones used to repair the altar are symbolic of the restoration of the twelve tribes in the Elijah passage whereas in the Exodus account the foundation of the covenant bond is described.

[4] Cf. below, Chap. V.

The elaborate altars of the agricultural peoples' fertility shrines contrasted greatly with the simplicity of the earth or unhewn stone altars of the Hebrew nomads.[1] Scholars differ in their explanations of the preference for an altar of earth and the prohibition of hewn stones in its erection. The view that this is a vestige of a more ancient animism, and that, therefore, the use of a tool to hammer or shape would drive out the indwelling numen is inadequate because it contradicts the symbolism of the altar center.[2] It seems much more probable, in the light of the obvious center symbolism, that the preference for an earth or unhewn stone altar should be interpreted in relation to the Hebrew polemic against the nature cults. If this is true, and if as an E source it transmits a nomadic tradition, this suggests an important transition from the religion of the patriarchs to that of Moses. By opposing a carefully constructed altar, Moses, while retaining the concept of the center in sacred space, nevertheless rejects the cosmogonic element in the construction of an altar and lays the foundation for the later prophetic rejection of the myth of eternal return in cyclical time in which each year time is regenerated and the cosmogony is repeated.[1]

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[1] Exod. 20:24-26. Cf. Barton, pp. 31-73.

[2] Cf. Oesterley and Robinson, p. 45.

In relation to nature cult practices, Barton, on the basis of the excavation of a high place at Gezer, notes how demoralizing the effect of such worship may have been and the basis for the prophetic reaction.[2] The story of the Golden Calf suggests that the struggle against fertility emphases may have begun early in the history of the Hebrew people. Although there is reason to believe that this story of the worship of the calf[3] received its final form in the period of the divided kingdom with direct reference to the "calves of gold" which Jeroboam placed in Bethel and Dan, it is not impossible to place its framework within the Mosaic period. Bull worship,[4] a common practice in later Egyptian history in the Apis cult, may not have been unknown in Egypt at this time. With regard to the period 3000 to 1600 B. C., nearly all local Egyptian gods were represented in animal form.[1] In the Canaanite religion of this period, El, because of the strong fertility imagery, was compared with a bull.[2]

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[1] See below, Chap. III. [2] Barton, p. 216.

[3] Cf. above, footnote, p. 77. The Old Testament, in its polemic against idols, consistently ignores the mythological polytheism which, although identifying the idols with the gods, refuses to confine the god to the idol. The reason for this is suggested by Yehezkel Kaufmann on the basis that for Israel idolatry was simply fetishism and lifeless. The Old Testament operates in a world without gods. Only Yahweh is real. Cf. Yehezkel Kaufmann, "The Bible and Mythological Polytheism," trans. from the Hebrew by Moshe Greenberg, Journal of Biblical Literature, LXX (Sept., 1951), pp. 179-197.

[4] For a discussion of this worship in later Egyptian history, see C. N. Deedes, "The Labyrinth," The Labyrinth, ed. S. R. Hooke (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), p. 28.

Rylaarsdam, although confident that this story received its present form under the stimulus of the struggle of the Jerusalem priests with the religion of Bethel, insists that one cannot rule out the possibility of a tradition stemming from the Mosaic period. This is because "archaeological research has made it clear that even the most outlying oasis and settlement shared in the substance of the Canaanite fertility religion and its cultus."[3]

With regard to the proscription of steps leading up to the altar, Hooke, in support of the theory which considers these prohibitions to be derived from the polemic against the nature cults, links this obscure prohibition, as well as others equally problematical, with the deification of the king.[4] Exodus 20:26b would represent a "later rationalizing explanation" which was attached to this prohibition.[1] This suggestion finds support in the pattern indicated by the repetition of the cosmogony, the regeneration of time, and the renewal of fertility in the yearly celebration in which the king was identified with the dying-rising god in the cosmic drama.[2]

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[1] Albright, p. 179.

[2] Cf. Wright and Filson, Westminster Historical Atlas . . . , p. 36.

[3] Rylaarsdam, p. 1064.

[4] Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern . . . ," p. 14, lists several of these proscriptions, all nature cult practices: Steps to the altar, seething a kid in mother's milk, incest, sacred prostitution, interchange of clothing between the sexes, etc.

We may conclude that the Sinaitic tradition, although retaining the concept of the center in sacred space as the point of communication with Yahweh, represents a remarkable divergence from the more ancient patriarchal pattern. The patriarchal religion cannot have differed greatly from the religion of Canaan. At best it represented an easy synthesis of nomadic and agricultural emphases.[3] In this context one may assert that Mosaic religion was more nomadic in its sky-god concept than the religion of the patriarchs in which the element of transcendence with relation to the deity is less prominent although by no means lacking.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 72.

[2] See below, Chap. IV.

[3] It is interesting to note how in Hosea in the 8th century B. C. a new synthesis was achieved without sacrificing the nomadic sky-god values in the recognition of the validity of certain nature cult emphases (cf. Hosea 2:8).

For an enlightening discussion of Canaanite influence in later Israel, especially with relation to Hebrew literature, see T. Worden, "The Literary Influence of the Ugaritic Fertility Myth on the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum*, III, 3 (July, 1953), pp. 273-297.

The Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire

> And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night; the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of cloud by night did not depart from before the people.[1]

The word translated "pillar" in these passages which describe the presence of Yahweh is *ʿamud* instead of the more cultic *maççebah*. The verbal roots of these two words are practically identical in meaning. Both are defined as "take one's stand, stand."[2] However, *ʿamad* is the more common verbal form in the Old Testament and, in general, corresponds to the English word "stand." *Naççab*, in its Old Testament usage, often carries the idea of authority[3] or purpose.[4] The form *ʿamad* can also be used in a special sense, viz., "stand opposed to something,"[5] "stand before someone,"[6] especially, "stand before Yahweh,"[7] but also "take one's stand in a covenant."[8]

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[1] Exod. 13:21, 22. This is considered a J source.

[2] BDB, pp. 662, 763-765.

[3] I Sam. 19:20; I Kings 4:5; etc.

[4] Gen. 24:13, 43; Exod. 7:15; 33:21; etc.

[5] Judges 6:31.

[6] Gen. 43:15; Exod. 9:10.

[7] Deut. 19:17; Lev. 9:5.

[8] II Kgs. 23:3.

The religious significance of the substantive form ʿamud is supported by its use with relation to the two pillars, of vivid cultic association, of Solomon's temple.[1] The same is true of the pillars of Ezekiel's temple vision.[2] Poetically, the same word is used in reference to the pillars of the earth[3] and of heaven.[4]

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[1] I Kgs. 7:15-22. These pillars were given names. יכין, from the root כון, probably means: "He will establish." בעז, perhaps related to עזז (strengthen) can mean: "in strength" or " in (it is) strength." Together they may mean: "He establisheth in strength." Cf. BDB, p. 127.

As symbols of strength, but hardly as channels of communication or centers, they may be compared to the two maces fashioned by the divine craftsman for Baal and also given names. This parallel is suggested by J. Gray in "Texts from Ras Shamra," Documents from Old Testament Times, ed. D. Winton Thomas (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1958), pp. 129, 131.

In this connection also Paul Leslie Garber in "Reconstructing Solomon's Temple," The Biblical Archaeologist, XIV, 1 (February, 1951), p. 8, writes: "Archaeologists today on the basis of much accumulated evidence are generally agreed that Solomon's Jachin and Boaz were free-standing pillars, the function of which was not structural but rather decorative and symbolic. The precise meaning of the symbolism is not yet apparent but it is likely that the pillars (as cf. 'the pillars of Hercules') were combined in some cosmic meaning together with the Sea and the Mountain-Altar to signify the Lordship of Yahweh over the elements of the natural world." This supports the microcosmic nature of altars and sanctuaries as described below, pp. 104, 105.

Julian Morgenstern, in "The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," Vetus Testamentum, X, 2 (April, 1960), pp. 138-197, connects these pillars with the eastern cosmic mountain of Semitic mythology. This mountain was split asunder to form two peaks at the time of the resurrection of the sun god each spring with the appearance of the equinoctial sun.

[2] Ezek. 40:49. [3] Job 9:6; Ps. 75:3.

[4] Job 26:11.

The identification of the "pillar of cloud" with the "Angel of Yahweh"[1] is suggestive of the symbolism of the center albeit in this case the picture is that of an ambulatory channel of communication between God and man. The description of the descent of the pillar in order that Yahweh might speak to Moses clearly shows it to be an axis mundi.[2]

Oases as Centers

Oases, with their groves of palms or terebinths pointing to the heavens and their fountains suggestive of a channel linking the earth with the beneficent waters of the underworld, carry a natural center symbolism.

Marah,[3] where the water was made sweet, was the scene of a hierophany--conclusive evidence for sacred space. A possible parallel to the healing aspect of the deity in the nature cult emphasis is suggested by the healing of the waters and the reference to Yahweh as healer with respect to the diseases of Egypt.[4]

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[1] Exod. 14:19.

[2] Exod. 33:9. This "tent of meeting" (Exod. 33:7) seems to be distinguished from the dwelling or tabernacle in the P material.

[3] Exod. 15:23-26.

[4] The reference to the plagues (vs. 26) may show P influence. For a discussion of the healing aspect of the deity in nature religions see Fisher, p. 100.

Elim[1] can mean either "gods" or "terebinths." Both meanings may suggest sacred space. It was probably an established desert center before the arrival of the Israelites. Since Israel did not take possession of this oasis, no altar was erected.

Rephidim[2]

The name "Rephidim" is from a Hebrew root which probably means "spread out" in the sense of a support,[3] and is probably a description of Moses' supported outstretched hand during the battle with Amalek.[4] Place names in this literature are often derived from events linked with them.[5]

The location of Rephidim is unknown, but the Amalekites are associated with Kadesh in Genesis 14:7 and, according to Numbers 14:25, they lived in the valleys --probably of the Negeb. Ernst Sellin has proposed that the battle with the Amalekites was for the possession of the oasis at Kadesh.[6]

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[1] Exod. 16:1..

[2] Exod. 17, 18.

[3] See BDB, p. 951.

[4] Exod. 17:11.

[5] Cf. Gen. 16:14; 35:8; 31:49; etc.

[6] Ernst Sellin, Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1924), I, 69.

The erection of an altar center[1] may be interpreted as a "taking-possession" of this new territory following a hierophany.[2] In this context the traditional enmity which existed between Israel and the Amalekites receives divine sanction.[3]

The reference to the "rock at Horeb"[4] as a source of water would identify Rephidim with the Mountain of God (Sinai) rather than with Kadesh or an independent site. As it stands, the picture of the mountain as the link with the subterranean waters as well as with heaven is suggestive of a center.[5] Yahweh is the source of this life-giving water.[6] The axis mundi relates the deity to heaven, earth, and underworld.

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[1] Exod. 17:15; 18:12. This concept of "taking-possession" through the construction of an altar will be discussed in the following chapter.

[2] Exod. 17:14.

[3] Exod. 17:14, 16.

[4] Exod. 17:6, usually considered an E source. See S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 119.

[5] This passage finds its parallel in Num. 20:2-13 where at Kadesh water is brought from the rock. An old tradition (Targum Onkelos on Num. 21:17) tells us that this rock followed Israel and continued to provide water. With reference to this see Rylaarsdam, p. 959. Paul seems to have this in mind in I Cor. 10:4--"For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

[6] Exod. 17:6a -- "Behold, I will stand before you."

The outstretched hands of Moses in the battle with the Amalekites finds interesting parallels in other Old Testament passages[1] as well as in the ritual practices of the nature cults.[2] It is true that Old Testament religion tended to reject the efficacy of cosmic dramatization based on imitative magic.[3] We have seen how this may be the basis for the prohibitions regarding altar construction in Exodus 20. Nevertheless, as W. W. Fisher has noted, the "holding up the hand insured success and the validity of Moses' authority."[4]

The Tabernacle

The Hebrew word mishkan, conventionally rendered "tabernacle," is from the verbal root shakan which means "settle down, abide, dwell."[5] Literally, mishkan should be translated "dwelling place." The tabernacle, as an ambulatory center, always occupies sacred space as depicted by the holy pillar of cloud hovering over it.[6]

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[1] Cf. Isa. 9:12, 17, 21; Ezek. 16:27; Ps. 28:2; etc.

[2] Cf. Fisher, pp. 89, 90.

[3] Beginning, as we have seen, with Moses, but especially in the prophetic polemic against fertility emphases.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[5] BDB, pp. 1014, 1015.

[6] Numbers 9:15-23.

Within and around it are furnishings rich in cultic symbolism related to a center, viz., ark, candlestick, table, altars, and laver.[1]

The tabernacle, like the temple,[2] is modeled according to its extra-terrestrial archetype revealed to Moses on the sacred mountain of God.[3] This concept of celestial patterns for all things meaningful to man on earth is almost universal.[4] It is found as early as 2,000 B. C.[5] in a document of Gudea describing the celestial pattern for the temple at Lagash.[6] Sennacherib also speaks of Nineveh as the city "whose form was delineated from distant ages by the writing of the heaven-of-stars.[7]

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[1] Exod. 40:1-15.

[2] According to I Chron. 28:11-19, David, having received the celestial pattern for the temple, gave it to Solomon.

[3] Exod. 25:40; 26:30; 27:8.

[4] See Eric Burrows, "Some Cosmological Patterns . . . ," pp. 59-66; also Eliade, Cosmos and History, pp. 6-11.

[5] Albright, From the Stone Age . . ., p. 150, gives this as the approximate date for Gudea under the Third Dynasty of Ur.

[6] Cf. Burrows, pp. 61, 62. For other Babylonian parallels and for similar evidence in Ras Shamra, especially the cultic use of a tent in Krt, see the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation of E. Horton, Jr., "The Old Testament Use of מועד in the Light of Ugaritic Parallels," pp. 100-108.

[7] Burrows, p. 61.

With relation to this pattern in the Old Testament Gerhard von Rad notes that it appears only in some of the later writings as, for example, the specifications for the tabernacle and the scroll handed to Ezekiel. These, he insists, are "scarcely more than a rudimentary relic of that all-embracing mythological conceptual world, with which Yahwistic faith plainly could establish no real relationship."[1] However, despite the relative silence of our records with regard to this pattern, it must be asserted that all of primitive man's meaningful activities, as we have seen,[2] are identified with that which happened "in the beginning." The following chapter will be concerned with evidence for this in relation to altar and sacrifice. Yahwism in its development and opposition to fertility emphases in the nature religions focussed its attention upon historical events. It tended, as von Rad has pointed out, to think in terms of the "eschatological correspondence between beginning and end (Ürzeit und Endzeit)."[3] This correspondence does not take place in sacred time in which the beginning and the end are identified within the circle of an eternal present. It can best be described as a movement of history from type to antitype or from promise to fulfillment.[1] The interesting observation that later Old Testament literature[2] again emphasizes the pattern of correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm with relation to a heavenly pattern illustrates the attractiveness of the mythological-cyclical view of history.

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[1] Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," Interpretation, XV, 2 (April, 1961), p. 175.

[2] See above, pp. 1-8. [3] G. von Rad, p. 175.

The legitimacy of including this material in this section, although attributed to P and considered late, lies in the possibility that, aside from the easily detected priestly emphases, there is here a vestige of a very ancient tradition or practice. This is upheld by the observation that at least one P source seems to make a distinction between the "tent of meeting" and the "tabernacle." According to Numbers 2 the tabernacle was placed in the center of the encampment whereas Exodus 33:7-11 speaks of pitching the tent (of meeting) outside the camp. It has been suggested by Rylaarsdam that the "tent of meeting" is of nomadic origin and as such was "the primary source for the inspiration and meaning" of the tabernacle.[1] This, however, in the light of Horton's study of the microcosmic nature of the cultic tent in Ugaritic literature seems an oversimplification.[2] In the final redaction the two tents are made to coalesce with the strange statement of Exodus 40:19 that Moses "spread the tent over the tabernacle."

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[1] See Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," trans. James Wharton, *Interpretation*, XV, 3 (July, 1961) pp. 310-338.

[2] As, for example, Pss. 78:69; 48:2; Isa. 8:18; Ezek. 40-48.

The concept is also found in the New Testament in Hebrews, especially Chap. 9 which describes Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary. It seems to lie back of the Fourth Gospel with its vertical view of time, It reaches its height in Rev. 21:2 ff. in the description of the vision of the New Jerusalem.

With regard to the ark, there is reason to believe that it dates from the nomadic period. Rylaarsdam states that this is its origin whether "it was taken over from the priest Jethro, from the shrine at Kadesh, or whether it was built by Moses himself."[3] Similar objects still exist among the Bedouins.[4]

The tabernacle fulfills all of the requirements of a sacred center. It was built according to the archetypal pattern as revealed in a hierophany.[5] It was the point of communication between heaven and earth, and it assured Israel of Yahweh's continual presence.

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[1] Rylaarsdam, p. 845.

[2] Horton, pp. 108 ff. Cf. also Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, trans. W. Whiston in The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus (Philadelphia: John E. Potter & Co.), III, 7, 7, p. 85.

[3] Rylaarsdam, p. 1022.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Exod. 24:40.

Kadesh

The root meaning of the verbal form qadash is "be set apart, consecrated."[1] As a place name Kadesh suggests "a holy place." This would point to it as a center. Modern archaeology has enabled scholars to locate this desert center with considerable certainty.[2] There is reason to believe that the name was extended to include the entire region known as the Kossaima Plain, a rather fertile area with a constant stream of water.[3]

This center, according to Numbers 20:14, was Israel's headquarters for an entire generation. It was there that Miriam, the sister of Moses, died and was buried.[4] From Kadesh the spies were sent into the Land of Canaan.[5] It was also the scene of the rebellion of Korah and his company--an incident illustrative of the symbolism of the center with relation to Kadesh. The hierophany,[6] in which communication with the celestial plane occurs, is followed by the opening of the earth to receive the rebels into

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[1] BDB, p. 872.

[2] Cf. Finegan, p. 130, for a discussion of the work of Woolley and Lawrence.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Numbers 20:1.

[5] Numbers 13:21-26.

[6] Numbers 16:24.

Sheol,[1] thus completing the picture of the true axis mundi. This incident, along with the name Kadesh (holy), established this place as a true center.

Cities of Refuge

The cities of refuge,[2] although related to legislation having to do with the settlement of Israel in Palestine, are described in the literature which portrays Israel's nomadic period. These cities suggest the mishpat (fellow feeling or justice) of the nomad--not that of the farming community in which the individual had few rights.[3] According to the clear inference of Exodus 21:12-14, immunity from vengeance in such cities was due to their quality of sacred space in which an altar was central. This immunity, however, was not binding for cases of willful homicide, as the case of Joab.[4]

> Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him treacherously, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.[5]

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[1] Numbers 16:32, 33.

[2] Exod. 21:13b; Numbers 35:6, 11, 13, 15; Joshua 20.

[3] See Louis Wallis, Sociological Study of the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912), pp. 88-97.

[4] I Kgs. 2:28 ff.

[5] Exod. 21:12-14.

Gilgal

The stone circles of Joshua 4 are described as memorials. These two "gilgals" (menhirs set in a circle)[1] were both visible at the time of the writing of the Book of Joshua.[2] For this reason it is possible to see in this tradition an etiological attempt, i.e., the stone circles had existed from prehistoric times, and this story represents an effort on the part of later Israel to explain their origin. However, other incidents in which pillars or stones were erected as "witnesses"[3] support a historical basis for this tradition.

These ancient monuments--cromlechs, menhirs, dolmens and gilgals--are remains of the men of the Stone Age.[4] They have been found in Europe, Asia, and Africa. They seem always to have been of cultic significance and to partake of the character of sacred space.

Gilgal,[5] east of Jericho,[6] to which this narrative has reference, seems to have been a place of illicit sacrifice in the time of Amos and Hosea.[1] Earlier, however, it was a legitimate Yahwistic center. There the angel of Yahweh had remained until Israel gained a foothold west of the Jordan.[2] During the conquest it was the site of Joshua's headquarters.[3] As one of the points on Samuel's yearly circuit,[4] it continued to enjoy unusual importance. It was there that Samuel offered sacrifice,[5] and there, too, the kingdom was given to Saul.[6]

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[1] Cf. Barton, p. 143. [2] Joshua 4:9, 21-24.

[3] Gen. 31:43-54; Exod. 24:4; Joshua 24:26. Also cf. above, p. 77.

[4] Cf. Barton, p. 143.

[5] Note the play on words of Joshua 5:9 in relation to circumcision and the popular etymology from galal which means "roll, roll away (BDB, p. 164)."

[6] It should be noted that there are at least three other Biblical sites which carry the same name, viz., Joshua 12:23 (perhaps Neh. 12:29 and I Macc. 9:2 refer to the same place) in the region of Dor; Joshua 15:7, on the northern boundary of Judah; and II Kgs. 4:38, with

The above data suggest that this site enjoyed the status of a sacred center from prehistoric times and continued in this category with full official approval at

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reference to Elisha and the poisonous pottage. With regard to the site east of the city of Jericho to which the "Gilgal" of the early conquest has reference, cf. James Muilenburg, "The Site of Ancient Gilgal," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 140 (Dec., 1955), pp. 11-27. Besides an investigation of the site of this ancient center, he also discusses its importance as a sanctuary. As represented in Joshua, Muilenburg considers Gilgal to be "the amphictyonic center for the twelve tribes of Israel."

[1] Amos 4:4; 5:5. Also Hosea 4:14; 9:15; 12:11.

[2] This seems to be the implication of Judges 2:1--"Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim." Also note the story of the hierophany (Joshua 5:13-15), probably at Gilgal, where Joshua is commanded to remove his shoes because of the sanctity of the ground. The hierophany of Joshua 7:10-15, at the same place, also shows its sacred space character.

[3] Joshua 9:6; 10:7, 15, 43; 14:6.

[4] I Sam. 7:16.

[5] I Sam. 10:8.

[6] I Sam. 11:15.

least until the time of David and, probably, until the period of the Deuteronomic reform. There is reason to believe that the prophetic attack was directed against the confidence in externals in religious practice and the immorality associated with the popular cultus rather than against the concept of the center as such.[1] In this sense the temple center in Jerusalem was not even free from their censure.[2]

Mount Ebal

The account of the erection of an altar on Mount Ebal recorded in Joshua 8:30-35, following the Deuteronomic Mosaic prescription,[3] is to be read in relation with the story of the ratification of the covenant at Shechem in Chapter 24.[4]

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[1] Amos clearly opposed the immoral practices and rites which have no relation to justice (2:8; 5:21 ff.). Hosea saw sacrifices as practiced in his day as gluttony under the guise of religion (8:11 ff.). Isaiah revealed a love for Israel's institutions. His vision took place within the temple (6:1-13). He considered Jerusalem inviolable (7:7; also chaps. 36, 37). Jeremiah opposed the false confidence in "sacred space" (7:4) and foretold the destruction of the temple (7:14; 26:6). But his real polemic was against those whose religion was divorced from ethics.

[2] Micah 3:12; Jer. 7:4; 26:6, 9.

[3] Deut. 11:29, 30; 27:2-8, 11-14.

[4] Cf. John Bright, "The Book of Joshua," The Interpreter's Bible, II, 595.

Gerhard von Rad notes that the covenant renewal described in Joshua 24 has reference to a periodic feast in which the coalition of tribes recurrently renewed their covenant with Yahweh and pledged themselves to do his will.[1] But this does not mean that this passage does not relate to an actual incident in central Palestine at the time of the conquest. This would be of great importance for the Hebrews who may not have taken part in the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, i.e., those who may never have been in Egypt or who had returned to Palestine on an earlier occasion.

The references to a sanctuary, a great stone, and an oak at this center point to a former hierophany,[2] perhaps with relation to the experiences of Abraham[3] and Jacob[4] at the Shechem center. The Samaritan shrine on Mount Gerizim finds its legitimization in this ancient tradition. In the Samaritan Pentateuch Gerizim is substituted for Ebal in Deuteronomy 27:4.[5]

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[1] Gerhard von Rad, Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testamentum (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), p. 44.

[2] Joshua 24:26.

[3] Gen. 12:6.

[4] Gen. 33:20.

[5] Thus locating the altar on the mountain considered sacred by them as illustrated by John 4:20.

Summary

In this section of this study it has become clear that the normal response to a hierophany is the erection of an altar or some other symbol of a center. Through this center, located in sacred space, runs the *axis mundi*, the channel of communication which unites the three cosmic planes. Because the deity is always present in such space, it is the place of both numinous experiences and maximum security.

Mosaic Yahwism preserves the concept of the center in sacred space as established by the erection of an altar following a hierophany, but it also introduces a historical dimension which, although anticipated in certain patriarchal experiences, shows a clear division between the religion of the patriarchs and that of Moses. However, patriarchal religion, because of its nomadic sky-god emphasis and strong clan solidarity in cultic expression, provides the raw material for the development of the Mosaic pattern.

These narratives of the Hexateuch clearly demonstrate that man demands a center for orientation. It is made known to him through a sacred manifestation--a hierophany. It is established permanently through the erection of an altar.

CHAPTER III

THE ALTAR SACRIFICE AND THE COST OF COSMOGONY

Theory

Relation of Ritual to Myth

Myth as used in this project can be described as an expression in dramatic narrative form of man's relationship with the universe. It is not to be defined in terms of legend. As a factor in man's effort to fulfill his material, intellectual, and religious needs, it is a part of a culture pattern in which all configurations present a consistent harmony. This pattern may be modified, but at each point of development it retains its relevance to every area of man's life.[1]

In this context myth must not be considered simply a description of a three-storied universe characteristic of primitive cosmology. Nor should myth be studied as a type of symbolism.[1] For archaic man, as Barr has noted,[2] myth must be seen in the light of the correspondence between the celestial pattern and its earthly counterpart. For the man of the ancient Near East, for example, "Tammuz dying and the vegetation dying are not merely like one another but are one another. The correspondence is not only believed but enacted."[3]

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[1] For a more complete discussion of the meaning of myth from this point of view, see James Barr's article on "The Meaning of 'Mythology' in relation to the Old Testament," Vetus Testamentum, IX, 1 (January, 1959), pp. 1-10.

Mythology, then, is closely allied with the cyclical view of history and archetypes. In ancient Israel, due to an emerging historical consciousness, the ancient mythological pattern was gradually modified until only fragments remained. Eschatology, a historical dimension, took the place of mythology. In its apocalyptic expression it retained certain mythological forms and concepts, but in the totality of its view it held little in common with the immanentism of ancient mythological thought. Mosaic Yahwism dramatized history rather than myth.[4] It is for this reason that a study of the early nomadic period is most relevant for this project because of its closer relation to ancient culture patterns of the Near East.

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[1] Cf. Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (New York: Norton, 1926), p. 23.

[2] Barr, p. 6.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cf. Martin Noth, "The 'Re-presentation' of the Old Testament in Proclamation," trans. James Mays, Interpretation, XV, 1 (April, 1961), pp. 50-60.

It is clear, then, that for ancient man, myth and ritual are inseparable. This statement describes one of the chief contributions of the "Myth and Ritual School" of anthropological and Old Testament studies of which S. H. Hooke[1] is a leading interpreter. In contrast with Sir James Frazer[2] who, with an evolutionary as compared with a historical approach to cultural anthropology, had considered myth to be the philosophy of primitive man, the "Myth and Ritual" anthropologists describe myth as the "spoken part of a ritual, . . . the story which the ritual enacts."[3] They teach that "the original myth, inseparable in the first instance from its ritual, embodies in more or less symbolic fashion, the original situation which is seasonably re-enacted in the ritual."[4]

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[1] With reference to the following books of which S. H. Hooke is editor: Myth and Ritual; The Labyrinth; and Myth, Ritual, and Kingship.

[2] See Sir James Frazer, Myths of the Origin of Fire (London: Macmillan, 1930).

[3] Hooke, Myth and Ritual, p. 3.

[4] Ibid.

If this is true, primitive man in his intellectual adventure with respect to the origin and phenomena of the universe did not find himself in a detached disinterested position. His interest was practical. His ritual was born in an "attempt to deal with or control the unpredictable element in human experience."[1]

In applying these insights to this study, altar and sacrifice must be considered man's existential response to life as he understands it. They demonstrate that archaic man's intellectual life was not dedicated to a detached drive for understanding.

The Creation Struggle

Near Eastern mythology describes creation in terms of struggle. This pattern is seen most clearly in Babylon. The Epic of Creation,[2] at least as ancient as the Sumerian dynasties, begins with the two divine principles, Apsu and Tiamat, representing respectively the sweet and salty primeval waters. Personified in terms of the male-female polarity, they became the parents of the gods. Later, disturbed by the behavior of their offspring, they resolved to destroy them. In this, however, their plans were frustrated. Apsu was bound and slain by the god Ea, and

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[1] Ibid., p. 4.

[2] Barton, p. 279.

Marduk destroyed both Tiamat and her brood of monsters. With her severed body he created the heaven and the earth.[1] In correspondence with this pattern of struggle are the Osiris-Horus myth of Egypt[2] and the story of Anath, Baal and Mot in Canaan.[3] There is some evidence of a similar Yahweh-dragon motif in the Old Testament.[4]

Modern man's concept of time and history precludes his full understanding of the ancient attitude toward myth and ritual. He sees history in terms of events occurring along a linear temporal plane. The primitive, however, understands myth as an embodiment of a situation which is by nature recurrent. This demands "the repetition of the ritual which deals with the situation and satisfies the need evoked by it."[5]

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[1] Cf. above, footnote, p. 49.

[2] See A. M. Blackman, "Myth and Ritual in Ancient Egypt," Myth and Ritual, pp. 16-39.

[3] C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, pp. 9-61.

[4] Cf. Job 9:13; 26:12; Pss. 39:11; 136:4; Isa. 30:7; 51:9. In these passages the enemy is Rahab. In Job 3:8; Ps. 74:14 and Isa. 27:1, the chaotic power is Leviathan. Job 7:9; Ezek. 29:3 and 32:2 refer to it as the sea. In Amos 9:3 the name is serpent. Cf. T. H. Robinson, "Hebrew Myths," Myth and Ritual, pp. 175-178.

[5] Hooke, The Labyrinth, pp. ix, x.

Creation is repeated. Time is continuously regenerated. Man, in his ritual acts, becomes one with the gods in their creative acts. The moment of ritual and the moment of creation coalesce. This is of utmost necessity because man cannot be a simple spectator in the struggle between order and chaos. Too much is at stake. Man is involved. This involvement is possible only through the concept of sacred time and sacred space.

Altar Construction as a Repetition of the Cosmogonic Act

Ancient man knew two ways to regenerate time, viz., the abolishment of history through ceremony and the repetition of the cosmogonic act through construction rites.[1] The establishment of a center through a hierophany leading to the erection of an altar (or other representation of the cosmos) is the equivalent of creation, and, as such, the victory of order over chaos and of the sacred over the profane.

Potentially, all space is sacred. Actually, it is not homogeneous. Vast areas remain unpossessed and, therefore, seem chaotic. The same is true for time. Actions which are insignificant in the sense that they cannot be considered repetitions of archetypal gestures cannot be considered sacred, and, therefore, they do not take place in sacred time. They are profane and meaningless. Through the construction of an altar in response to a hierophany, territory is possessed and the space for which the altar is a center is sacred. Time related to this construction and its ceremonies as well as to significant actions in sacred space is also sacred.

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[1] See Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 76.

The relationship which obtains between space and time for archaic man is illustrated by Flavius Josephus' description of the traditional symbolism of the tabernacle, the garments of the high priest, and the sacred vessels which he describes as an "imitation and representation of the universe."[1] He compares the three parts of tabernacle with the land, sea, and heaven. The twelve loaves of bread denote the year.[2]

This attitude toward altar or sanctuary as a microcosm erected by man demonstrates his identification with the deity in the cosmic drama of creation.[3] It is for this reason that primitive man was able to view his cultic actions as creative and meaningful.

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[1] Flavius Josephus, p. 85.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. Eliade, Cosmos and History, pp. 76-78.

Altar Sacrifice as Descriptive of the Cosmogonic Struggle

Creation is costly because it demands a struggle with chaos. Sacrifice is descriptive of this cost. It is obvious that sacrifice has taken on many other meanings. However, an investigation of the evidence in the early nomadic period points to this fundamental meaning of the rite.

There are always two steps involved in the repetition of the cosmogonic act, viz., the establishment of a center through a hierophany with the accompanying altar construction, and the confirmation of the validity of this construction through the act of sacrifice.[1] Numerous examples have been cited with reference to the establishment of a center.[2] The confirmation for the validity of this center is understood as a repetition of the divine sacrifice as, for example, that of the primordial monster in Babylonian mythology, viz., Tiamat. This shows the thoroughness with which primitive man identified himself with the original creative act.[3]

The sacrifice itself suggests three closely related concepts. It repeats, as indicated above, the sacrifice of the primordial goddess. It implies that nothing can be permanent unless it is animated.[4] It reflects the principle that life cannot continue without the giving of life.[1]

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 20. [2] Above, pp. 41-98. [3] Above, p. 4.

[4] Creation is a living thing. Sacrifice as the liberation of life provides the necessary animation.

The Fertility Motif

The fertility emphasis in the Near Eastern cultic pattern is closely related to the altar as the place of creation and to sacrifice as descriptive of its cost. The energy of the universe, depleted in effecting the fertility of man, beast, and field, must be constantly renewed. Sacrifice, releasing life at the heart of sacred space, regenerates the universe and makes a new cycle possible.

E. O. James has observed that "early man in his struggle for subsistence projected his religious consciousness primarily into the symbolic objects and emblems connected with the principle of fecundity."[2] Certain spots are especially charged with sacred potency. This is undoubtedly true of the sanctuary as the center of sacred space and the point of creation. The sexual act, taking place in sacred space and sacred time, is an act of creation. It is analogous to the heaven-earth hierogamy.[3]

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[1] Primitive man must have observed this on both the vegetable and animal levels. It was a part of his own experience in a direct involvement with nature. It would be natural to project it to the cosmic realm as well. Its highest expression in the O. T. is Isa. 53.

[2] E. O. James, Prehistoric Religion, p. 204.

[3] Cf. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 170-72.

Evidence for this Pattern in the Old Testament

Nomadic Period

There is a tendency to dismiss these ancient traditions of Israel's nomadic past by simply attributing their origin to later etiological motives. This, as we have seen, would imply a detachment which was never possible for archaic man. He desired to understand, not for the sake of knowledge alone, but in order to relate himself more fully to the drama of life. Of course the etiological factor cannot be denied. These traditions did answer man's deepest questions regarding origins. But these very questions and the answers they provoked were a part of man's response to the challenge of his environment. Man was able to participate in meaningful activities only as he recognized their relationship to the beginning. In other words, one does not find in these ancient stories an etiology simply to satisfy man's curiosity. Above all, they describe archaic man's participation in the primeval acts related to creation--a participation dramatized in the act of establishing a center and taking possession of new territory.

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

The creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is from P--a late document.[1] P, however, is capable of preserving some very ancient traditions.[2] Lying back of this highly spiritualized description of the creation, many scholars see the framework of an earlier tradition, not unlike that transmitted to us through the Babylonian epic in which the basic motif is the cosmogonic struggle of order versus chaos.[3]

P, strongly monotheistic, was able to harmonize the ancient dualistic tradition with a more advanced cosmogony. The original act, as suggested by Genesis 1:6, 9, seems to have been the formation of chaos out of which, as raw material, God formed the ordered world.[4] This is supported by Second Isaiah.[5]

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[1] P is thought to have been codified *ca.* 500 B. C. See W. W. Fisher, *Outline of Hebrew History, Literature and Religion* (Rev. ed.; Los Angeles: Univ. of Southern California, 1948), p. 20.

[2] See footnote above, p. 31; also Albright, *From the Stone Age . . .* , p. 252.

[3] See above, pp. 102-108.

[4] As suggested by Simpson, pp. 450, 466, 467.

[5] Isa. 45:7; 48:3-5, 12, 13.

Verse two offers the closest analogy to Babylonian mythology.[1] It is for this reason that it is considered an intrusion into the P corpus by Simpson,[2] an effort to supply, from a well-known narrative, that which was lacking in the P account. The spirit (ruaḥ) of God struggles against the primeval waters of the deep (tehom). Granted, however, that there is an etymological equivalence between Tiamat (Babylon) and Tehom (Genesis), this does not necessarily establish a common origin for the two creation accounts. This relationship, if it exists, must demand something more than linguistic analogies. It is for this reason that von Rad can state:

> Hätte das Wort einmal eine mythische Bedeutung, so hat sie sich in unserem Text längst verloren, wie das ya schon aus der Zusammenordnung von Begriffen aus ganz verschiedenen mythologischen Vorstellungskreisen hervorgeht.[3]

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[1] See Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, p. 53, for suggestions relating to parallels between vs. 2 and the Babylonian account. Both suggest original chaos. Tehom appears to be derived from the same Semitic root as Tiamat. The division of the firmament is analogous to the division of Tiamat's body. Also the sequence of events is the same in both accounts.

[2] Simpson, p. 467.

[3] Gerhard von Rad, Das erst Buch Mose (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), II, 38.

J. V. K. Wilson, speaking of the equation of Tiamat with tehom can also write:

> It is now, however, recognized that, since the two words have different meanings--for they cannot be used interchangeably--it is of no importance whether they are etymologically connected or not. . . . Thus it seems very probable that the epic has no connection of any kind or at any point with Genesis, and that each is *sui generis*.[1]

Given, however, the parallels which do exist with relation to the chaos motif, the sequence of events, and the division of the firmament, even aside from the linguistic argument, some relationship must exist. This is further supported by the traditional Mesopotamian background for patriarchal origins pointing to the region of Haran, or Ur, as the source of these accounts of early tradition. Canaanite literature shows no parallels.[2] References in other parts of the Old Testament support the theory that here we do have a vestige, although veiled, of a creation struggle not unlike that of Babylon.[3]

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[1] J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "The Epic of Creation," *Documents from Old Testament Times*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1958), p. 14.

[2] See G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, p. 44.

[3] Cf. above, footnote, p. 103. Cf. Rahab as a monster: Job 26:12; Ps. 89:10; Isa. 51:9. Yahweh subjects the monster in Ps. 74:13-15. Ps. 46 describes the end time as a period of the resurgence of chaos. Also cf. Isa. 5:30; 17:12-14; 27:1; Ps. 24; 93. See Simpson, p. 451.

The Deluge

This narrative, P in framework but conflated with earlier documents,[1] reflects a tradition of great antiquity and, as such, was surely a part of the oral tradition of the nomadic period. It provides a clear description of the repetition of the cosmogonic struggle. The earth, covered with the waters of the flood, returns to its primeval chaotic undifferentiated state. Only Noah, his family and the living things with him lived in the ordered security of the ark--a sacred center, a microcosm. As in the creation account, order triumphs and the waters recede to their appointed place.[2]

Noah's first act upon leaving the ark, as directed by a theophany,[3] was to build an altar and offer sacrifice.[4] Given the chaotic state of the earth, one may suggest that this symbolizes a creative act--the repetition of the cosmogony. The establishment of the order which this represents is made vivid by the promise of the sequence of seasons. As in the original creation sacrifice,[5] the sacrifice on this occasion, too, animates the cosmos by the releasing of the energy of the victim(s).[6]

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[1] Cf. Creelman, p. 30. [2] Gen. 1:6-8. [3] Gen. 8:16 f.

[4] Gen. 8:20. [5] In the Babylonian epic.

[6] This theory, which, of course, with reference to the Biblical narrative, cannot be fully demonstrated, yet

Further evidence for the linking of this account with the creation struggle motif is found in the sign of the bow,[1] a word which in its Hebrew form, qesheth, is used elsewhere in the Old Testament only as a weapon of war.[2] Skinner has traced the concept of the rainbow understood as the bow of a cosmic battle among other peoples.[3] With reference to the Genesis narrative he writes:

> It springs from the imagery of the thunderstorm; the lightnings are Yahwe's arrows; when the storm is over, his bow (cf. Hab. 3:9-11, Ps. 7:13 f.) is laid aside and appears in the sky as a sign that His anger is pacified.[4]

Other Old Testament passages support this observation.[5] In the Babylonian account of creation "Marduk's bow, which he had used against Tiamat, is set in the heavens as a constellation."[6]

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which, as in this case, seems to provide a key for understanding, is based upon the studies of Eliade and James. In this respect Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 20, writes: "Nothing can endure if it is not 'animated,' if it is not, through a sacrifice endowed with a 'soul.'"

[1] Gen. 9:8-17.

[2] See von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose, p. 111: "Das hebr. Wort, das wir mit Regenbogen übersetzen, bedeutet sonst im A. T. den Kriegsbogen." This is supported by BDB, pp. 8, 295.

[3] Skinner, Genesis, p. 173. [4] Ibid.

[5] Cf. II Kgs. 13:14-19; Pss. 7:12, 13: 18:14; Hab. 3:9, 11.

[6] Skinner, p. 173.

The Covenant Sacrifice of Genesis 15

Many scholars consider this account to be a late etiological attempt through which Abraham, the first of the patriarchs, is made to relate to the covenant.[1] Simpson attributes this passage to a late J source, because normally J and E use the word berith (covenant) only in relation to the sacred mountain.[2] The ritual described in Genesis 15 finds a parallel in Jeremiah 34:18, 19. The ceremony is probably very ancient, and the degree of the experience of the numinous described in these verses with relation to the Supreme Being suggests a nomadic origin for both the tradition and the ceremony.

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[1] See W. A. Irwin, "Nation, Society, and Politics," The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, pp. 328, 329.

[2] Cf. Simpson, pp. 598, 599. The Hebrew expression of Gen. 15:18 is literally: "On that day Yahweh cut a covenant with Abraham . . . ." B. Davies, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament (London: 1871), p. 103, derives berith from barah, an obsolete form which he translates "cut."

On the other hand, BDB (p. 136), using the same verbal root, suggest that its meaning is "bind, fetter." Both ideas are no doubt present in the idea of covenant.

The sacrificial element is always present. Our records indicate that no covenant was celebrated without a sacrifice (cf. Gen. 31:54; Exod. 24:3-8). Through such a sacrifice the covenant parties were united in a new life. Order was established. Could this have a relationship to the myth of severing Tiamat's body out of whose parts the cosmos was formed?

With reference to the phrase "cut a covenant," Robertson Smith, p. 480, suggests that it is derived from the type of sacrifice described in Gen. 15 and Jer. 34.

Modern scholarship is divided with relation to the antiquity of the covenant idea. W. A. Irwin credits it to the "prophetic histories," viz., J and E, but later adopted by Hosea and Jeremiah.[1] Other scholars, such as Noth[2] and Wright,[3] point to the fact that while neighboring peoples enjoyed a monarchial government, Israel was held together by an amphictyony--"an association of tribes, bound together by a sacred compact around a central sanctuary."[4] This type of organization is nomadic. With relation to Genesis 15 von Rad notes: "Die Erzählung von dem Bundesschluss Gottes gehört zum Ältesten in der Überlieferung von den Erzvätern."[5]

With regard to the chronology of this account Simpson makes the suggestion that 15:1 should follow 13:17 as follows:[6]

> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you. After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

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[1] Irwin, p. 329.

[2] Martin Noth, Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), pp. 188-229.

[3] G. E. Wright, "The Faith of Israel," The Interpreter's Bible, I, 356.

[4] Ibid.

[5] G. von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose, III, 159.

[6] Simpson, p. 599.

This would imply that Abram's fear is connected with the unpossessed land through which he is to walk. The extent of this land is described in Genesis 15:18 ". . . from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."[1] The hierophanies of Genesis 12 and 13 had given him possession of limited areas.[2] This theophany promises the entire land, all of which is potentially sacred.

The promise is interpreted as a part of a covenant agreement. Abram responds in faith.[3] The covenant is validated by means of sacrifice through which life is released to animate the new creation. This is necessary because for archaic man, sacred space--the only ordered territory--is alive with supernatural power as the channel of communication with heaven. The sacrifice, in this case, is a cosmogonic rite. Creation is repeated and given life. Participation in this renewal of life is shared by both parties in this covenant sacrifice.[4] God, Abram and the newly possessed land are indissolubly united.

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[1] Suggestive of the Davidic Kingdom.

[2] Shechem, Bethel and Hebron. [3] Gen. 15:6.

[4] This does not mean a totemistic type of kinship. Even Robertson Smith admits that early in their history the Hebrews had risen above this conception (cf. p. 318). In the light of our discussion perhaps a sacred kinship, as opposed to a totemistic natural kinship, is more to the point. The ceremony in the celebration of the covenant suggests such a union.

Exod. 24:5-8 records a description of the use of the blood in a covenant sacrifice. A common life,

The Sacrifice on Moriah[1]

Primitive man views nature as alive because it partakes of religious values. The sacred is ingrained in the structure of the universe.[2] This is because the world of nature suggests order as opposed to chaos. Chaos is profane. Order is sacred. Since that which has structure has order and is sacred, man sees himself as a microcosm.[3] The same reasoning may apply to a nation as a sacred living entity structured according to the divine plan--the celestial archetype.

This chapter (Genesis 22) may be interpreted as the birth pangs of the nation.[4] In this sense it is descriptive of a cosmogony. The erection of an altar or a building and the founding of a city or a nation demand a sacrifice which releases life in order to animate the new creation. In this section, with reference to the very beginning of the Hebrew nation, human sacrifice as the instrument of this animation was prescribed. An adequate substitute was provided.

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symbolized by the blood, was evident in that a portion of the blood was thrown on the altar in representation of Yahweh, and the remainder was sprinkled on the people.

Ps. 50:5 supports the relationship of sacrifice to covenant: "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

[1] Gen. 22. [2] Cf. Eliade, The Sacred . . . , p. 116.

[3] Ibid. p. 165. [4] Gen. 22:15-19.

In this narrative the usual formula is followed. The construction of the altar repeats the cosmogonic act.[1] The altar sacrifice represents the cosmogonic struggle and gives the newly formed microcosm permanence through the release of life, in this case an animal substitute,[2] capable of animating it.

Another significant element in this narrative is the understanding that the first-born belongs to the deity. Normally, the first-born is considered to be the one who carries the life principle in its greatest potency.[3] His sacrifice is demanded in order to animate and maintain the established order, because the cosmos is constantly under the threat of reabsorption into chaos.[4]

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[1] See above, pp. 104-107.

[2] For a discussion of the effectiveness of such substitutes in Assyria, Babylon and Israel, see S. H. Hooke, "The Theory and Practice of Substitution," Vetus Testamentum, II, 1 (Jan., 1952), pp. 2-17.

[3] Robertson Smith, p. 465, states: "I apprehend that all the prerogatives of the firstborn among Semitic peoples are originally prerogatives of sanctity; the sacred blood of the kin flows purest and strongest in him."
Also Oesterley, Sacrifice . . . , notes on p. 108: "The firstlings of flocks and herds contained fresh life in a sense different from that of ordinary offspring. By sacrificing the firstlings, life was released and consecrated to the god whose power of fructifying was thereby renewed, since in drinking their blood he absorbed new life. Moreover, in partaking of the sacrifice of the first-born, the worshippers likewise received within themselves renewed life."

[4] Cf. Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 106.

By regenerating the depleted energy of the created order, the deity, always closely identified with the established order, is also regenerated. This is supported, in part, by the fact that in the ancient Near East, the first-born was often considered the offspring of deity. This is illustrated by the following quotation from Eliade:

> The first child was often regarded as the child of a god; indeed, throughout the archaic East, unmarried girls customarily spent a night in the temple and thus conceived by the god (by his representative, the priest, or by his envoy, the "stranger"). The sacrifice of this first child restored to the divinity what belonged to him. Thus the young blood increased the exhausted energy of the god (for the so-called fertility gods exhausted their own substance in the effort expended in maintaining the world and ensuring its abundance; hence they themselves needed to be periodically regenerated.[1]

The cycle of nature with the vitality of spring, the growth characteristic of summer, the senility of fall, and the death of vegetation in winter would quite naturally have suggested to primitive man, given his close identification of the fertility deity with nature itself, a similar cycle in the life of the deity. The cosmic drama of the New Year celebration in Babylon illustrates this cosmology.

In a sense, as Eliade has observed,[2] Isaac was a son of the deity because both Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of human fertility. But although the story fits nicely into the framework of oriental religions of the period, its underlying presuppositions as suggested in this narrative are revolutionary. Abraham prepares to offer Isaac, not because he considers him to be the physical offspring of God or even, according to the accepted pattern, to renew the depleted forces of the deity and animate the creation, but because of a special hierophany which makes the divine will central.[1] This concept with the concomitant idea that this will does not merely embrace the endless repetitions of archetypes lies at the base of the Hebrew genius in its transcendence of the traditional cyclical view of history.

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[1] Ibid., p. 109. [2] Ibid.

Of course it is impossible to insist that this view of linear time was fully grasped by the patriarchs. It is clear that the framework of sacrifice described in the literature which transmits to us the stories of the nomadic period reflects the common Near Eastern pattern of the circulation of energy and the cyclical view of history. This paper is concerned with pointing out such evidence. But, as we have seen,[2] this pattern in its nomadic context and with its sky-god emphasis provided the foundation for the higher concepts grasped by the great prophets.

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[1] Gen. 22:1, 2.

[2] Above, p. 98. The concept of sky-god and accompanying hierophany permitted the emergence of a historical dimension in a way which the relative immanence of a fertility deity could not permit.

Suffering and War

Archaic man was able to tolerate suffering by associating it with the dying-rising god motif. Pain belonged to the cycle of life. By relating it to the suffering of Tammuz,[1] or a similar deity, it could be identified with the cosmogonic struggle. That which was considered to be a repetition of an archetypal act was purposeful and, therefore, tolerable.

Closely related to this was the concept of the "Holy War,"[2] a dominant Old Testament theme. War was identified with the primeval struggle of order versus chaos. When ancient man fought, he did so religiously, i.e., he repeated archetypal acts in sacred time.[3]

Two nomadic traditions illustrate this principle, viz., the battle with Amalek[4] and the battle at Hormah.[5] In the battle with the Amalekites Moses stood "on the top of the hill," i.e., in sacred space. In this battle the forces of order prevailed. According to our theory, the erection of an altar following the battle represents the cosmogony. Its construction means that Israel has taken possession of new territory--the result of the cosmogonic struggle.

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[1] Cf. Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 101: "Any suffering could be tolerated if the drama of Tammuz was remembered." This was because man, too, was involved in this cosmic drama.

[2] See G. von Rad, Der Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1951).

[3] Eliade, p. 29, writes: "Each time the conflict is repeated, there is imitation of an archetypal model."

[4] Exod. 17:8-16.

[5] Numbers 14:39-45.

At Hormah it was different. Neither Moses nor the ark led Israel into the battle. They fought in chaotic profane space. There was no center. No altar was constructed. No sacrifice was offered. Chaos triumphed.

CHAPTER IV

THE REPETITION OF SACRIFICE

The repetition of sacrifice precludes the return of chaos. This is inherent in the archaic cyclical view of history. Energy circulates from the deity to man and nature. Through the sacrifice of a human being or a product of nature life is again released to regenerate the deity. This is the "myth of eternal return." Chaos is periodically defeated. The universe is recurrently renewed.

It has been shown that this cyclical view of time and nature was largely transcended in Hebrew religion. But the old forms of cultic expression, a key to the ancient ontology, remained to provide the framework for a new pattern. In order to recapture this ancient ontology we must consider both the continuing forms and the earliest traditions.

As noted earlier, our problem concerns the fact that the written records date from a period in which, at least for Israel's leaders, this old pattern of cyclical renewal was no longer central.[1] Nevertheless, recognizing this factor, it is possible through comparison with contemporary non-Hebrew practices to study the nomadic response in the period when there was no appreciable difference between Hebrew and non-Hebrew religion, i.e., the early nomadic or the patriarchal period.

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[1] The prophets, fully aware of the historical dimension with relation to Yahweh's will, were able to face the

Sacrifice was periodically repeated because of the continuing nature of the cosmogonic struggle. Yet, we are sure, for archaic man the term "repetition" would be inadequate and misleading. His gesture in offering sacrifice was conceived as an effective identity with the archetypal model at creation and, therefore, it could not be separated from it in time. This means that in our use of words such as "repetition," "return," "recurrency," etc., we must, in our own minds, rid them of all temporal overtones. The term "continuance," removed from our concept of linear time, may provide a better description of the primitive point of view.

For early man war, sickness, and calamity, or even the arrival of winter or the dry season, were suggestive of the threat of chaos. The release of new life in the

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future courageously without identifying it with the past in terms of archetypes. They saw the present in terms of promise and the future as fulfillment. The correspondence between the beginning and the end (Urzeit und Endzeit), although probably a reflection of the ancient pattern, was interpreted linearly. Cf. above, pp. 89, 90; also Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 104.

cosmogonic struggle through the rite of sacrifice is part of the drama for the establishment of order. "The sacrificer's object is to get control of the whole world--not temporal, but ritual control."[1] This control is possible only through identification with the original cosmogony in sacred time and sacred space, for only then and there is creative activity possible.

The dying-rising god drama in the ancient Near East, to which the Old Testament offers numerous allusions, is the most descriptive illustration of this attitude.[2] This celebration effects the periodic victory of order and light over chaos and darkness. This New Year Festival, considered a pattern common to most of the ancient world by the "Myth and Ritual" writers,[3] contained the following elements: the drama of death and resurrection with relation to the god; the myth of creation; the ritual combat; the sacred marriage; and the triumphal procession.[4] Mircea

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[1] A. M. Hocart, "The Life-Giving Myth," The Labyrinth, p. 267.

[2] Cf. Fisher, Isaiah . . .; also Hooke, "Traces of the Myth and Ritual Pattern in Canaan," Myth and Ritual, pp. 68-86. For Biblical references, see above, p. 103.

[3] This concept of a pattern common to the Near East is attacked by H. Frankfort, The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions (Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1951). For Hooke's defense, see Myth, Ritual and Kingship, pp. 1-21.

[4] See Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," Myth and Ritual, p. 8.

Eliade finds that the various rites related to this celebration can be put into two categories, viz., those which signify the return of chaos, and those which are symbolic of the cosmogony.[1] With regard to the relationship existing between this celebration and the myth of creation Hooke also writes:

> The widespread occurrence of the myth of creation in connexion with this ritual pattern suggests the recall or re-enactment of the original situation out of which the civilization of the community, with its institutions, its customs, and its gods, came into existence. This situation always involved a struggle of some kind.[2]

It has been pointed out that the form persists even when the basic presuppositions which uphold it have long since been greatly modified. This is due to a conservatism inherent in religion, especially with relation to ritual. It is for this reason that the study of sacrificial forms and periodic festivals among the Hebrews suggests that a pattern of repetition was once a part of their response to the uncertainty of history. With regard to the nomadic period, however, we must make due allowance for the basic difference between the nomadic and the agricultural peoples. The nomad with his strong clan solidarity, with less dependence upon the agricultural aspects of the cycle of nature, and with a greater consciousness of the transcendence of the deity was more easily made aware of the historical dimension.[1]

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[1] Eliade, Birth and Rebirth, p. xiii.

[2] Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," Myth and Ritual, p. 8.

The repetition of sacrifice and the great importance of the annual religious festivals point to an original pattern of periodicity for ancient Israel. Under Deuteronomic and priestly influence these ancient festivals were given historic rootage.[2] In origin the three great feasts of Israel seem to be more closely related to agrarian life than to the nomadic pattern.[3] But to consider them simply harvest festivals is to miss the cosmogonic significance which great religious festivals hold for premodern man. With regard to harvest festivals, primitive ritual involves more than a mere giving of thanks. Through such ritual man is involved in the cosmogonic act of renewal.[1]

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[1] The nation as a whole was unable to emancipate itself fully from the cyclical pattern. Even the Messianic hope in a later period may reflect something of the ancient ontology. The triumph over chaos is projected into the future. There is a correspondence between the beginning and the end. All of nature is to be regenerated (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 9:1-6; etc.). The drama is no longer recurrent. It is now given a historical direction. But its value remains. With this hope man can face the "terror of history." All is under the overlordship of God.

[2] Deut. 16:1 -- "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover to the Lord your God; for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night."
Deut. 16:12 -- (with reference to the Feast of Weeks) "You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt."
Lev. 23:42, 43 -- "You shall dwell in booths for seven days . . . . that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

[3] The Unleavened Bread and Passover celebration corresponds to the early barley harvest. The Feast of Weeks coincides with the harvest of wheat. The final harvest festival of summer fruits is related to the Feast of Booths. The statutes which control these celebrations reveal their agrarian harvest character (cf. Lev. 23).

It would be false to assume that Israel knew nothing of the ritual of periodic renewal during her nomadic period. Flocks and herds, the source of wealth, as well as plant life, demonstrate periodicity with relation to fertility, birth, growth, and death. Some of our older sources suggest that the regeneration of time was not foreign to the Hebrew of that time.[2]

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[1] Cf. Eliade, Cosmos and History, pp. 51-92.

[2] This is with reference, above all, to the institution of the Sabbath. It is true that some scholars consider this to be of a later period because of the supposition that nomads, due to the nature of their daily tasks, could have no day of inactivity. Pfeiffer, p. 231, argues for the non-nomadic origin and practice of this institution.

On the other hand, Rylaarsdam, p. 984, in support of the nomadic character of the Sabbath points to Israel's semi-sedentary life at Kadesh and the general prevalence of the observance of the seventh day in the Near East.

The best support for the antiquity of the Sabbath is probably the lunar basis of the week, available to men of any economic circle. One may argue that the cessation from all labor may be late, but the recognition of the seventh day as a division of time is unquestionably early.

For a discussion of the Babylonian concept of special days, corresponding in part both linguistically and in practice with the Hebrew Sabbath, see McNeil, pp. 121-23.

The religious observance on the tenth day of the seventh month, later called the Day of Atonement,[1] followed by the Feast of Booths was probably, in origin, a New Year celebration. This finds support in the name of the month, tishri, which is derived from a root meaning "begin." As pointed out above, this feast was related to agriculture and suggests the settled conditions of life in Palestine. Yet the presence of the scapegoat ceremony, reflecting the period of nomadism in its relation to desert and camp, make it appear far more archaic.[2]

The possibility of identifying this festival with the New Year ritual pattern of the ancient Near East[3] finds support in the reference to the Feast of Yahweh, described in Judges 21:19-24, during which the village girls were allowed unusual freedom. The dancing and suggestion of occasional orgiastic excesses parallel the New Year ceremonies in other areas of the ancient world.[1]

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[1] Cf. Lev. 23:27.

[2] This is discussed by Nathaniel Micklem, "The Book of Leviticus, Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, II, 77.

[3] For Biblical support outside of the literature reflecting the nomadic period, some scholars, on the basis of the study of the Psalms, see in the Hebrew ritual the annual victory of Yahweh over the forces of chaos followed by his enthronement (cf. S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 56-95.). Although Mowinckel believes that Israel assimilated many of the forms of the Canaanite kingship pattern, he rejects the theory that Yahweh was ever a "dying-rising god" in the ritual of the Hebrews. Cf. also A. R. Johnson, "The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus," The Labyrinth, pp. 73 ff.

The general pattern for the celebration of the New Year is the drama of regeneration, the renewal of depleted energies, and the repetition of archetypal actions.

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[1] Cf. Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 61; also Birth and Rebirth, p. xiii.

CHAPTER V

SACRIFICE AND THE TRANSITION FROM THE PROFANE TO THE SACRED

In this chapter we shall investigate the place of sacrifice and related ceremonies in the transition both from the profane to the sacred and from the sacred to the profane in terms of both time and space. This demands a sharper focus in our understanding of these categories. We have seen that religious man desires always to live in sacred space and sacred time. All that is meaningful and creative in his life takes place in the realm of the sacred. He fears the unpossessed desolate places which have not been established by the erection of an altar and validated through the release of life in sacrifice. Yet he is never completely free from the profane. In many of his actions he sees no relation to archetypes. He is also aware of degrees of the sacred with relation to space. That space which corresponds to the sanctuary, especially the inner holy or most holy place, is especially sacred. The profane must be seen in contrast with the degree of sacredness characteristic of the sanctuary.

Defense of the Center

Numerous passages from the literature which reflects the nomadic period describe the need for the defense of the center from all contamination with the profane.

In the Eden saga[1] in which the center is represented by the tree of life, "the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way"[2] were placed to the east of the garden to prevent man's access.[3] This cosmic sword, described in terms of lightning, is prominent in other Old Testament passages.[4] The function of the cherubim as guardians is also common.[5] Simpson compares them with the sphinx in Egypt and the colossal figures stationed before Assyrian temples.[6]

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[1] Gen. 2:8-3:24.

[2] Gen. 3:24.

[3] The cherubim and the sword probably represent two distinct symbols. Cf. Skinner, p. 89.

[4] Above, p. 72, footnote.

[5] In Exod. 26:31 the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was inlaid with figures of cherubim. They overshadowed the mercy seat above the ark (Exod. 37:7-9). They were also found within the inner sanctuary of the temple (I Kgs. 6:23-28). Also cf. II Sam. 6:2; Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 1:5-21; 41:18, 19; and Rev. 4:7.

[6] Simpson, p. 516.

In the Eden narrative man was not permitted to return to the sacred center. In general, however, the defense of the center was carried out by means of certain taboos and ceremonies. A careful ritual preparation enabled man, or at least the priests, to enter the sanctuary. This is supported by the tradition relating to the return of Jacob to Bethel in which, before the erection of an altar in response to a hierophany, foreign gods are put away and purification is effected through the change of garments.[1] Precautions taken at the foot of Sinai reveal the same attitude.[2]

Both Eliade[3] and Robertson Smith[4] emphasize the need for desacralization upon leaving sacred space quite as much as the taboos relating to its approach. This is supported by the fear shown by Aaron and all the people toward Moses upon his descent from the mountain because of the numinous character of his face.[5]

On the occasion of a hierophany, extreme care is demanded. Both Moses[6] and Joshua[7] were commanded to remove their shoes. The holy mountain on the occasion of the Sinaitic hierophany was completely taboo for all but Moses and his companions.[1] Not even the priests, much less the people, were allowed to approach it "lest he break out against them."[2]

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[1] Gen. 35:1-3. [2] Exod. 19:10-25.

[3] Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 36.

[4] Robertson Smith, p. 453.

[5] Exod. 34:29-35.

[6] Exod. 3:5, 6.

[7] Joshua 5:15.

The barrier which exists with relation to the communication of the profane with the sacred is illustrated by the arrangement of the tribes around the central tabernacle.[3] Because the tabernacle represented Yahweh's presence in the midst of his people, it was guarded by the Levites and only authorized priests were able to approach it.[4]

The location of the tabernacle within the inner square of the encampment is symbolic of the solidarity of the group. Cultic activity was corporate for ancient man to a degree unknown in modern worship. He recognized, as modern man does not, that any disqualification on the part of one affects the entire group. Numerous rites were formulated to remove the taboo on the part of the individual and the group.[1] This strong group consciousness, characteristic of all primitive peoples and especially of nomads, can be explained with relation to their struggle for existence. Survival was possible only with the complete cooperation of each member. In cases of severe offense the deviating party was completely removed from "the midst of the assembly,"[1] i.e., his excommunication was complete. Occasionally this involved the death penalty. Yerkes lists those taboos capable of placing an irremovable defilement upon the offender.[2] His study shows that the greater part of the legislation relative to these extreme measures was of priestly origin. But illustrations of taboo in earlier periods show that it represents a very fundamental religious concept. Such disqualifications could not be tolerated. Examples from the nomadic era include the story of the jealousy of Miriam and Aaron, [3] Korah's rebellion,[4] and the sin of Achan.[5]

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[1] Exod. 19:21-25; 24:1, 2; 24:9-11; 24:13; 34:3.

[2] Exod. 19:24b.

[3] This is described in Numbers 2.

[4] Numbers 3:10. This attitude toward the defense of the center seems to be characteristic of all periods of Old Testament religion. This P material, considered late, illustrates this. Cf. footnote above, p. 31, with reference to P as a possible source for the nomadic period.

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[1] Yerkes, *Sacrifice . . .*, pp. 168-196, suggests that three Hebrew words "related to the removal of these disqualifications for worship" are found in Biblical literature. The words with their basic meanings, as defined by BDB, follow:

חטא (*ḥaṭaʼ*), defined as to "miss a goal or a way" as illustrated by its use in Exod. 5:16 with reference to the Israelite slaves' inability to supply enough bricks because of lack of straw. In a derived sense it applies to the sacrifice which effects the removal of the taboo brought about by missing the mark. These references, however, in which the word is translated "make a sin offering" are found only in P and are, therefore, other than illustrative of the development of a primitive concept, of little significance for the nomadic period. However the generic idea may well be very primitive (cf. Exod. 29:36; Lev. 6:19; 9:15).

אשם (*ʼasham*), meaning "offend or be guilty" in the sense of having committed an injury, but in its substantive form referring to an offering, is described by BDB, p. 79, as relating to offenses against God or man of a nature that could be estimated and thus be covered by compensation. Since this offering occurs only in later literature, not in JED, its place in our study is purely illustrative of the later development in the ritual purification of those who had offended.

כפר (*kipper*) is generically thought to mean "cover" and is used figuratively in the sense of "cover over, pacify or make propitiation." It is used in Gen. 32:21 where Jacob hoped to "cover the face" of Esau with a gift, i.e., he wanted to pacify him in this way. It occurs in the early strata of Old Testament literature and, no doubt, represents a primitive concept.

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[1] Numbers 19:20.

[2] Yerkes, p. 169. He lists such taboos as those brought about by neglect of purification (Lev. 7:20, 21; 22:3; Numbers 15:20); eating blood (Lev. 7:25, 27; 17:10-14); killing a sacrificial animal without offering sacrifice (Lev. 17:3, 4); eating Yahweh's part of the sacrifice (Lev. 7:25); worship of "Molech" (Lev. 20:2-5); failure to keep the Passover (Numbers 9:13); neglect of parents (Lev. 20:9); adultery and other sex irregularities (Lev. 18:6-29; 20:10-21); and presumptuous sins (Numbers 15:30, 31).

[3] Numbers 12:1-16.

[4] Numbers 16:1-17:13.

[5] Joshua 7.

The Priesthood and This Transition

Legislation relative to the activities of the priests as described in our P sources is usually considered post-exilic. As a special class of people trained in the intricacies of the cult, the priests alone were qualified to perform these cultic acts. Their position is in harmony with the numinous character of the center under their control.

The tradition which our Biblical records provide with relation to the nomadic period points to a marked difference between the patriarchal and the Mosaic practices. During the patriarchal period the priestly functions were the prerogative of the head of the family or clan.[1] There is no reference to a special class within the clan to whom the responsibilities of the cultic acts belonged other than to the family or clan head. Abraham,[2] Isaac,[3] and Jacob[4] built altars. Jacob's possession of the household gods,[5] evidence of the headship of the clan,[6] points to the fact that in this simple nomadic life there was no special person or class who was in charge of the cultic emblems aside from the patriarch himself.

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[1] A custom renewed in Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 A. D. (cf. E. O. James, The Nature and Function of Priesthood, p. 160).

[2] Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18; 22:9.

[3] Gen. 26:25.

[4] Gen. 31:46-54; 35:1.

[5] Gen. 31:34.

[6] This is supported by the Nuzi tablets (cf. Finegan, p. 55).

For the Mosaic period the picture is more complex. It is true that more people were involved. The simple clan organization of the patriarchal period gave way to a union of tribes under Moses. But this does not adequately explain the emergence of Mosaic Yahwism. It is more than a development of patriarchal cultic practices.[1] With relation to the priestly aspect of Mosaic religion, Buchanan Gray finds its origin in Midian through Jethro.[2] Jethro instructs Moses in both the sacrificial and the oracular functions of the priesthood. Of these two functions, the oracular is the more important. The primary duty of the priest is to consult the deity.[3] However, the priest is also the guardian of the sanctuary. This means that he has oversight with relation to the ceremonies relevant to the transition from the profane to the sacred. This involves sacrifice.

We may conclude that the priest as a mediator who receives oracles from the deity and transmits them to the people and as the one who guards, oversees, and controls the center and all cultic acts is, in all of his functions concerned with the transition from the profane to the sacred and from the sacred to the profane.

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[1] See above, p. 98.

[2] Gray, Sacrifice . . . , pp. 206-210.

[3] Cf. James, The Nature and Function of Priesthood, p. 73.

Covering as an Element in This Transition

The demand for the removal of disqualifications in order to permit approach to the sacred center appears in the earliest strata of our literature.[1] The Hebrew word most characteristically applied to this act and often used in conjunction with different types of sacrifice is kipper.[2] It illustrates in its Old Testament usage the high degree of clarity which obtains in relation to man's unworthiness in the presence of God. This unworthiness is not, in the first place, ethical. It is above all a description of man's "creature-feeling" in relation to his experience with the numinous.[3]

This intense feeling of the need of a covering in the presence of the deity also explains man's desire to identify himself with the sacred in his activity. The transition rites of which sacrifice is often the final act[1] make this identification possible through the concept of sacred space and sacred time in which man's significant actions are at one with their archetypes. The communion meal,[2] a common aspect of the sacrificial ritual, creates unity through the common participation in the sacrificial food which is regenerative in its effect.

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[1] Cf. Gen. 35:2; Exod. 3:5, 6; 19:14; 24:5; 34:3.

[2] Usually defined as "cover or cover over." Cf. above, p. 135, footnote; also Gray, pp. 67-73.

[3] Cf. Otto, pp. 50, 51.

Threshold Sacrifices

Inseparably linked to the defense of the center, the duties of the priest, and the concept of covering are the rites relating to the crossing of the threshold--the boundary or frontier between the profane and the sacred. No rite of sacrifice more graphically portrays this concept of transition or passage. The existence of this type of sacrifice shows how impossible it is to subsume all types of sacrificial offerings under one heading. The various types of sacrifice which we have considered have in common only man's response to his experience of the numinous.

The threshold rites suggest, above all, the qualitative difference between the sacred and the profane in relation to both time and space. They demonstrate the fundamental non-homogeneity in space and time with reference to the sacred and the profane.[1]

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[1] As illustrated by Lev. 16.

[2] Gen. 31:54; Exod. 18:12, 24:11.

We have seen that religious man desires to live in sacred space, near the center, at all times. Since this is impossible with relation to the sanctuary, the problem is solved, in part, by considering the world in which he lives a cosmos--an ordered creation characteristic of sacred space. Therefore, although the center par excellence is always the sanctuary, Eliade has noted that an entire country (such as Palestine), a city, or even a dwelling participates in the symbolism of the center where communication with heaven is possible.[2] It is for this reason that threshold rites apply to "secondary centers" as well as to the sanctuary.

The threshold, the frontier between the two types of space and time, is guarded by the spirit world. Only those whose disqualifications are covered or purged can make this transition without danger. This may involve sacrifice to these guardian divinities.[3]

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[1] The persistence of threshold ritual reveals that for religious man, even today, space and time are not homogeneous. Many churches demand certain gestures on the part of those entering the sanctuary. The portal provides the point of transition. Cf. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 25.

[2] Ibid., pp. 42-50.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

Several allusions to the importance of the threshold are found in the Biblical literature which relates to the nomadic period. The most frequent of these is the prominence given to the gate as the place of judgment. The theocratic nature of Israel's political organization indicates that judgment always took place within a religious context. The gate was also the place where contracts were celebrated. The numinous character of the threshold provided the necessary religious sanctions.

It was at the gate of the city where Ephron was sitting with the other Hittites that Abraham was able to close the transaction for the purchase of the burial cave for Sarah.[1] At the gate of Bethlehem Boaz agreed to redeem Naomi's inheritance by accepting his duty with relation to levirate marriage.[2] The gate of Israel's encampment was considered the place of decision:

> Then Moses stood at the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.[3]

The most frequent reference to the gate as the place of judgment is found in Deuteronomy.[4]

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[1] Gen. 22:10.

[2] Ruth 4:1-12.

[3] Exod. 32:26.

[4] Deut. 21:19; 22:15, 23, 24; 25:7.

Abraham's descendants are promised the gates of their enemies--the place of passage for control of the sacred space within.[1] Jacob considered Bethel to be the gate of heaven.[2]

Joshua's oath with reference to the curse upon Jericho indicates both foundation sacrifice, for the liberating of life to animate the newly established city, and threshold sacrifice, to make the transition from the profane to the sacred.[3]

In Genesis 4:7, from J, appears what is probably the most primitive Biblical allusion to a threshold numen and the corresponding need for adequate rites of passage. The corruption of the text as it now stands is suggested by the lack of correspondence between the substantive, ḥaṭṭaʾth, and its verb, robeç. For this reason Oesterley and Robinson would substitute the name of an Assyrian and Babylonian threshold demon for the subject of the verb, the consonants of which correspond to the letters of the Hebrew verbal form.[4] This would mean that the threshold numen would be "couching at the door." Since we find this incident within the context of sacrifice, this emendation provides an interesting possibility.[1] According to the narrative, Cain's sacrifice at the threshold of the altar center was inadequate. It could not effect the transition from the profane to the sacred. Placed in the context of the polemic between the nomad and the farmer and given the Old Testament preference for the nomad, we can understand how, in the eyes of J, the farmer with his nature cult did not know how to offer sacrifice to Yahweh. Because of the inadequacy of his religious forms, he was unable to make the transition from the profane to the sacred.

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[1] Gen. 22:17b. [2] Gen. 28:10-22.

[3] Joshua 6:26 -- "Cursed before the Lord be the man that rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his first-born shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates."

[4] Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, pp. 68-70.

The Decalogue was probably used as a threshold liturgy during the pre-exilic period,[2] and may have been used in the same way with relation to the sanctuary during the nomadic or semi-nomadic period.[3]

Where evidence for threshold sacrifice and rites exists in Biblical literature, it is often seen in relation to the nature cults. For this reason it may receive negative treatment.[1] However, the need for ceremonial purification, as discussed in the previous section, shows that the concept of the threshold was never absent from the history of Israel and has its roots firmly planted in the nomadic period.[2]

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[1] Of course the concept of threshold numens or demons was foreign to the monotheism inherent in Yahwism. This would account for the earlier emendation in which "sin" becomes the object of the verb.

[2] Cf. Jer. 7:9, 10; also R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 117.

[3] This seems to be true of Joshua 24:14-28.

Rites of Passage

The stages in man's existence which demand rites of passage in primitive society include, as a minimum, birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Each transition demands initiatory rites of deep religious significance in man's quest for the sacred and his efforts towards emancipation from the profane. He desires to remove himself by successive stages from the level of the natural and the profane to the plane of the supernatural and the sacred.[3] It is a passage from one mode of being to another in which man's natural humanity must be abolished.[1] This is effected by means of rites which depict a death and a resurrection or a new birth. These rites are always considered archetypal in origin for they find their frame of reference in that which was done in the primordial past by the gods, ancestors, or culture heroes of the tribe.

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[1] As suggested by the possible textual change in Gen. 4:7 (cf. above, pp. 143, 144). Also Zeph. 1:9 may have reference to a threshold rite: "On that day I will punish every one who leaps over the threshold . . ." This, of course, may simply refer to rebellion on the part of slaves, but if it is a threshold rite (as is very possible), it is condemned along with other non-Israelite customs. For the prophets, an ethical liturgy (cf. Jer. 7:9, 10 with Joshua 24:14 ff.) rather than one based upon the fear of a numen unrelated to Yahweh, was the only meaningful rite of transition.

[2] Gen. 35:2; Joshua 24:23, 24.

[3] Cf. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 191, 192.

Biblical literature which reflects the nomadic period suggests that this concept lay behind the rites of passage with reference to birth, puberty, marriage, special status, and death. For convenience these rites of passage may be grouped in the following categories: circumcision, sacrifices at birth, special status, and death.

Circumcision

Beyond question, circumcision is the most important Old Testament rite. Its origin is uncertain, but it is not a Hebrew invention. McNeile notes that the Egyptians practiced it as early as the Fourth Dynasty.[2] It was practiced by Edom, Ammon and Moab, too, according to Jeremiah 9:25.

In the P account of Genesis 17 circumcision is a sign of the covenant. It is described in this passage as a rite of transition following birth which enabled the male child to become a part of the clan. The J account of Genesis 34 which records the Shechem incident indicates that the P concept of circumcision as a sign of the covenant which bound the Hebrews together in union with Yahweh is ancient. This is also supported by the story of Joshua 5. The antiquity of the custom is demonstrated by the use of flint knives, apparently no longer in common use.[1]

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[1] Cf. Eliade, Birth and Rebirth, pp. ix-xv.

[2] McNeile, The Book of Exodus, p. 29.

For almost all primitive peoples, the really definitive rite of passage takes place at puberty or, at least, as a prerequisite for marriage.[2] It is most likely, therefore, that this was originally true of the Hebrews. As a rite performed when a youth attains manhood, it permits passage to a more sacred stage and the knowledge relevant to it.[3] In this respect, Exodus 4:24-26, despite its corruption, may reveal something to us about the early Hebrew practice. The story would suggest that Moses had failed to make full preparation for his marriage.[1] To enter into the realm of the sacred without making the necessary transition through prescribed rites was felt to be extremely dangerous. In its appeasement of the deity, circumcision in this context may be interpreted as a blood sacrifice necessary for the transition from one stage of life to another. The tendency, as Robertson Smith has observed, for "pious parents to dedicate their child as early as possible to the god who is to be his protector through life"[2] appears a reasonable explanation for an original puberty rite to become a rite of passage at birth.

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[1] Cf. Exod. 4:24-26.

[2] Cf. E. O. James, "Initiatory Rituals," *Myth and Ritual*, pp. 150-54. Also cf. Ludwig Kohler, *Hebrew Man*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 33, where the same thesis is maintained on the basis of Gen. 17:24-27; 34:1-31; Joshua 5:2; and Ps. 19:5.

[3] Cf. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 191. Also cf. above, p. 45, with reference to the knowledge of good and evil in relation to sexual understanding.

Sacrifice at Birth

Birth, too, demands a rite of passage. Eliade, describing this need, writes:

> When a child is born, he has only a physical existence; he is not yet recognized by his family nor accepted by the community. It is the rites performed immediately after birth that give the infant the status of a true "living person"; it is only by virtue of those rites that he is incorporated into the community of the living.[3]

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[1] McNeile, p. 29, makes this suggestion.

[2] Robertson Smith, p. 328.

[3] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, pp. 184, 185.

With the exception of the rite of circumcision which, as noted above, in the course of Israel's history became an initiatory ceremony taking place eight days after birth,[1] we have little evidence for birth rites in the Old Testament. However, recognizing this basic need on the part of primitive man in other cultures, we cannot believe that it was entirely absent from ancient Israel.

The demand for the first-born in the Covenant Code,[2] especially in its form in the J Ritual Decalogue[3] and in P,[4] where an animal substitute is provided, is suggestive of a rite of passage. Perhaps the sacrifice of the substitute for the first-born, by releasing energy through the giving of life,[5] was valid for all subsequent births.

The naming of the child may be considered a part of the rite of passage following birth. For primitive man, name and essence are identified. Eliade observes that "for all premodern societies the individual's name is equivalent to his true existence, to his existence as a spiritual being."[1] This is clearly illustrated by the christening ceremony in liturgical churches in which baptism, an initiatory rite, and naming belong together. Evidence for this in the early literature of the Old Testament is largely limited to the meanings associated with names, a corroboration of the equivalence of name and essence.[2]

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[1] Cf. Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3.

[2] Exod. 22:29. [3] Exod. 34:19, 20.

[4] Numbers 18:15, 16.

[5] Cf. above, p. 123.

Special Status

With regard to special status the initiatory rites relate only to particular individuals or classes within the larger group. One mark of special status during the patriarchal period lies in the change of names.[3] A change of name, given the primitive conviction that name and essence are to be equated,[4] is equivalent to a new birth.[5] Those who receive this special status enter into a new and superior stage of existence. This is illustrated by the changes of name recorded in Genesis where, in every case, a special hierophany relating to the new stage of life awaited the candidate.

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[1] Eliade, Birth and Rebirth, p. 28.

[2] Cf. Abraham as father of the nation; Jacob as supplanter; etc.

[3] Eliade, pp. 28, 31, 68, 74, 75, shows the relationship between the new name and initiation at puberty--a new status.

[4] Cf. above, p. 149.

[5] Cf. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 190.

In the P account of Genesis 17, Abram becomes Abraham. The suggested etymology,[1] if it is really intended as such, cannot be adequately explained. Some doubt if a serious etymology was really in mind.[2] In this respect Skinner writes:

> The line between word-play and etymology is difficult to draw; and all that can safely be said is that the strained interpretation here given proves that אברהם is no artificial formation, but a genuine element of tradition.[3]

The important observation for this study, however, does not relate to the derivation of the name, but rather to the fact that this change, whatever its basic meaning, is equivalent to a new status--a new mode of existence with relation to the sacred. For the bearers of the early tradition, the new name carried a meaning equivalent to the character of Abraham.

With relation to the wife of Abraham and the change of her name from Sarai to Sarah,[4] P offers no etymological explanation.[5] The change of status, however, is seen in the promise that "she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."[1]

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[1] Gen. 17:4, 5.

[2] Skinner, p. 292.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] Gen. 17:15.

[5] The form Sarai may simply retain the old feminine ending in which case there would be no basic difference in the meaning of the two forms. If this is true, it would throw light both on the antiquity of the tradition and the time of its writing. It is interesting to note the possible etymological relationship between the form Sara and Israel in which case the basic meaning from שרה would be "strive." Cf. Gen. 32:28; also Skinner, p. 295.

In regard to the incident leading to the change of name from Jacob to Israel, the extreme anthropomorphism of the narrative suggests its great antiquity. The new name, usually thought to be derived from sarah,[2] and meaning in this case "God strives" or, as interpreted, "striver with God," reveals Jacob's new status. The "new birth" aspect of this struggle and the new name are clearly depicted in the remainder of the story of the life of Jacob. Instead of the crafty rogue of the Laban narratives, he is to become the patient old man of the later period of his life.[3]

Examples of special status for which initiatory rites were prescribed in later Israel include the priest,[4] the prophet,[5] and the king.[6] Of these, the installation of the priest appears to be the oldest. The priesthood in Israel probably dates from the nomadic period under Moses. In the priestly account of Leviticus 8, to which 28 is parallel, Aaron and his sons are specially clothed, anointed and consecrated through special offerings. These rites are followed by a communion meal. The age of this tradition is uncertain, but given the complexity of the religious and political problems with the union of tribes under Moses, a professional priesthood would be a natural development.[1]

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[1] Gen. 17:6.

[2] Cf. Gen. 32:28. Other possible derivations have also been suggested, such as zarah meaning "scatter," and sarar which means "escape."

[3] As observed by Simpson, p. 726.

[4] Exod. 28; Lev. 8.

[5] I Kgs. 19:16.

[6] I Sam. 10:1; 16:13; I Kgs. 19:16.

The earliest reference to priests as a body, usually considered an anachronism in the light of Exodus 32:25-29, is found in Exodus 19:22 with reference to the Sinaitic hierophany.

Death

Probably due to the prophetic polemic against the nature cults with their "dying-rising god" theme, the Old Testament records very little which might be regarded as a part of initiatory rites relative to entrance into the next world. Sheol for the Hebrews was a land of shadows in which the dead were even excluded from a meaningful relationship with Yahweh.[2] Nevertheless, archaeological excavations show that Israel's dead, as was true of her contemporaries, were buried with food and other offerings to facilitate their journey or passage to the stage of future existence.[1]

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[1] Cf. McNeile, p. lxiv.

[2] Cf. Isa. 38:18 -- "For Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness." This was modified later, however (cf. Isa. 26:19).

Mourning ceremonies, as described with relation to Jacob's loss of Joseph,[2] point in the same direction. These, along with laceration of the body,[3] cutting the hair,[4] and fasting correspond to the general pattern of initiation rituals with reference to the next life.[5] Added evidence for such a pattern in the Old Testament is provided with relation to the care taken of the body as indicated with regard to Sarah,[6] Jacob,[7] and Joseph.[8]

Pilgrimages

Traditionally, a pilgrimage is always viewed within a religious context. It is defined as "the action of journeying, especially as a devotee seeking a shrine."[9] A pilgrimage, for traditional man, always leads toward the center--the point of contact with heaven. It suggests the abandonment of the normal and the comfortable life in favor of the struggle toward religious perfection.

Religious man has the capacity to view his entire life in terms of such a journey. With respect to this tendency, Eliade has observed that "every road can symbolize the 'road of life,' and any walk 'a pilgrimage,' a peregrination to the Center of the World."[1]

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[1] Cf. Barton, pp. 222-226. [2] Gen. 37:34, 35.

[3] Lev. 19:28. [4] Lev. 19:27. [5] Cf. Kohler, p. 35.

[6] Gen. 23:4. [7] Gen. 50:13. [8] Gen. 50:26.

[9] Webster's New International Dictionary, 2d. ed.

Abraham, in obedience to a hierophany, left his kindred and his father's house to seek a center in a new land.[2] Upon his arrival he took possession of it in response to another hierophany. This "taking-possession" was effected by the erection of an altar.[3]

Jacob, also on a pilgrimage, was shown through a sacred manifestation that a center existed at Bethel.[4] Although he spent many years away from it, he finally returned to build an altar there.[5]

Moses, having fled from Pharaoh and after years of following the life of a nomadic shepherd, was made aware of a sacred center of orientation at the sacred mountain.[6]

The pilgrimage of the Israelites took them, after a generation of wandering, to the land of Canaan--the center established by the patriarchs.

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[1] Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 183.

[2] Gen. 12:1.

[3] Gen. 12:7.

[4] Gen. 28:10-22.

[5] Gen. 35:1-7.

[6] Exod. 3:1-6.

The pilgrimage,[1] always a transition, follows dangerous paths. Although chaos threatens at every step, its goal is the center. Its reward is meaningful life in sacred space and sacred time.

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[1] Robertson Smith, pp. 481-485, links vows with pilgrimages. Vows represent man's determination to reach the center. They are common in all periods of Old Testament life. The vow of Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:20) and the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:2-8) are illustrative of this determination in the nomadic period.

Under Deuteronomic influence with the centralization of the cultus in Jerusalem, pilgrimages became very important. They were probably common in the early pre-exilic period as well. This is indicated by Exodus 23:14-17, considered an E source, in which all males were to appear before the Lord on the occasion of the three major feasts.

The "Songs of Ascent," Psalms 120-134, are related to the pilgrimage ritual in the journey to Jerusalem for these feasts. Pfeiffer, p. 629, describes them as "pilgrimage songs changed by Jews on the way to Zion."

The Christian life was considered a pilgrimage from the beginning of the movement. Notice Acts 19:23 -- "About that time there arose no little stir concerning the Way."

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study has been directed toward those elements which are basic to ancient man's religious expression in order to investigate their relationship to the literature which reflects the earliest period of Israel's nomadic life. In the light of this research we may conclude that many of the most primitive Old Testament sacrifices and related rites, in keeping with the common ancient Near Eastern pattern, can be interpreted as repetitions of archetypal gestures.

This is supported by the concept of the center conceived as the point of the original creative act and identified by the presence of an altar or other material representation, a construction which normally follows a hierophany. Another indication of man's identification with archetypes lies in the concept of sacred space and sacred time in which alone he finds security and engages in meaningful activities. This permits certain sacrifices and related rites to be explained as repetitions which, in sacred time and sacred space, coalesce perfectly with that which was done by the deity or culture heroes in the beginning. Through the construction of an altar conceived as a microcosm, man takes possession of new territory--a cosmogonic act. This creative act repeats the primordial struggle of order versus chaos. The resultant sacrifice points to the liberation of life for the animation of the new creation. Evidence for this is strong in the Babylonian myth of Marduk and Tiamat. As we have seen, the imagery appears in the Old Testament with relation to the dragon motif. The continuing nature of this struggle demands its repetition in sacred space and sacred time. This is supported by the existence of ceremonies depicting the cycle of nature in which the fertility emphasis is dominant.

Closely related to the concept of the center understood as the channel of communication between the cosmic planes are the ceremonies and sacrifices concerned with the following: the defense of sacred space, the institution of the priesthood, the removal of disqualifications with relation to access to the numinous, the threshold, initiation or passage, and pilgrimages. Enveloping all of these concepts is the belief that the significant is the archetypal. For this reason history can be faced because it is periodically abolished, control of deity is reaffirmed, and chaos is recurrently defeated.

Evidence has been presented to indicate that for archaic man, myth and ritual are inseparable. Together they represent man's response to his environment. Sacrifice, in its earliest expression, is not the result of disinterested speculation in terms of myth. Nor are the accompanying myths efforts to explain the ritual procedure in sacrifice.[1] Viewed as a unit they depict man's inescapable relationship with all of nature--a cosmic drama in which he is not an indifferent observer but a fully involved participant. Primitive man's intellectual adventure knew no separation of thought from act.

In any society there lie latent limitless possibilities which await the contribution of gifted individuals to give them direction and drive in the development of distinctive culture patterns. This study has indicated that the Hebrew pattern, beginning with Moses, achieved a new understanding of the activity of God in history. This insight enabled Israel to discover linear time in which promise and fulfillment gave her courage to face the future.[2]

This suggests an additional area of research in which a comparison of archaic man's cyclical view of history with the concept of promise and fulfillment in later

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[1] Our records suggest that the patriarchs, for example, in their involvement erected altars because of a direct experience with the numinous, not because of abstract reasoning regarding the function of altar and sacrifice. Through such construction and sacrifice they became participants in the creative act.

The association of myth with archaic man's cultic acts is illustrated by the Babylonian New Year festival. A parallel tendency in early Israel is indicated by the account of the renewal of the covenant of Joshua 24 in which a historical survey of Yahweh's mighty acts is a part of the ritual.

[2] Cf. the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; also Exod. 12:24-27; Deut. 31:1-13. The historical summary of Joshua 24 is relevant here, too.

Old Testament thought would be carried out. The tendency of apocalyptic literature to equate Urzeit and Endzeit should also be considered. Another interesting area of investigation in the light of the symbolism of the center would concern the relationship of these Old Testament shrines to the concept of Sheol with regard to life after death. A point of approach is indicated by Albright's study which shows that among the Canaanites bamah may refer to funeral installations as well as to a high place.[1] Closely related to this would be a more thorough consideration of the relation of the center to the subterranean waters and the primeval flood. It would also be of value to compare the conflicting attitudes toward images with relation to the center in the religious expression of the Old Testament writers and the non-Hebrew literature of the period.

In summary we may say that this study has demonstrated the fundamental religious similarity between the early patriarchs and the people among whom they sojourned. It has also shown, in the literature describing the Mosaic period, how Israel's divergence from the Canaanite pattern originated with the discovery of God's activity in history and led to the insights of the prophets with regard to promise and fulfillment in linear time.

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[1] W. F. Albright, "The High Place in Ancient Palestine," Vetus Testamentum, Suppl. Vol. IV (1956), pp. 242-258.

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